



**Window  
on  
Jordan**

## Water your taste buds with a melon

By Ilham Sadaq

**MELONS, MELONS.** melons: let there be melons everywhere! Because of the recent rains and the hot weather over the last few weeks, the melon harvest this year is unusually large, and the craze for these tasty pink-and-green ovoid shapes is already gearing up. Keep the motto "quench your thirst" in mind as you wander from tent to tent and melon to melon in downtown Amman and Zarqa—or almost anywhere in the Kingdom—and indeed you'll find your thirstiest dreams perpetually satisfied by this most watery of fruits.

But it isn't just the melons themselves that are

essential in this season of rising thirsts—there is also the ritual involved in searching out a good one. Melons are harvested and brought in from nearby farms to vendors who hoist temporary tents on city streets and along all Jordan's highways, where they hawk this luscious fruit to any and all—and because of the plentiful supply this year, at an unusually low price.

Since the tents perform the double duty of being both a shop and a home to the vendors during the harvest season, it's a simple matter to buy a taste at any time of the day or night—the merchant is both always home yet always open, providing a perfect situation for seller and buyer alike.

They say you can't tell a melon by its cover. For all the techniques used to determine which melons are ripe—from tapping the skin with your knuckle and listening for a certain echo, to shaking it, rolling it on the pavement, talking to it and listening for a little more side to tell you he's ready to be let out—there's still a certain drift of a certain odor that tells you that all is well and ready and sweet—there is no way to actually tell but to cut the melon open.

...this, the rule "the deeper the red, the sweeter

Continued on page 2



# The Star

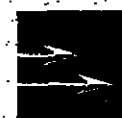


**Jordan's political, economic  
and cultural weekly**

**Le Jourdain**  
Supplément en français du Star

● 50 ans après,  
c'est toujours la Nakba  
● Koweït/Jordanie :  
Au temps de la haine

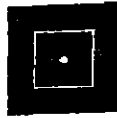
page 12



express  
service



cargo  
service



domestic  
service



logistics  
service



special  
service



catalog  
service

**ARAMEX**

total transportation solutions

tel: 5515111, fax: 5516820, internet: www.aramex.com

AMMAN, 14-20 MAY 1998, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 49, 350 PAGES

أسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

## Albright calls for Israeli flexibility

*"...in response primarily to Israeli requests, we allowed more time and then more time and then more time for our suggestions to be studied, considered and discussed..." - Madeleine Albright*

By Thomas W. Lippman  
WASHINGTON—Under fire from some Jewish groups and members of Congress for negotiating tactics that put pressure on Israel, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright appealed to the Israelis Tuesday to accept US terms for resuming negotiations with the Palestinians that she called "balanced, flexible, practical and reasonable."

In a hastily scheduled speech and news conference at the National Press Club, Albright portrayed herself and President Clinton as dogged supporters of Israeli interests who have "gone the extra 20,000 miles" to obtain what Israel said it wanted, accelerated negotiations on the "final status" of Israel's borders, the return of Palestinian refugees and the future of Jerusalem.

She said she hoped her scheduled meeting here Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would result in an agreement enabling the United States "to re-issue the invitation for

accelerated permanent-status talks to be held under President Clinton's auspices in Washington very soon."

Just over a week ago in London, Albright invited Netanyahu to join Clinton and Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat in Washington Monday to begin those "final status" talks, but only if Israel first agreed to US "ideas" about the next phase of Israeli military redeployment in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu refused, saying the US demand for a handover of an additional 13.1 percent of the West Bank would endanger Israeli security.

The US overture was portrayed as a last-ditch US effort to break an impasse that threatened to undo years of Middle East diplomacy. But it provoked criticism from many members of Congress, who said Washington should not be making security decisions on Israel's behalf or dictating terms to an ally.

Albright took heavy criticism last week in a bruising hour-long conference call with

leaders of US Jewish organizations, according to participants, and said she found it "hurtful" that they would suggest that the administration was undermining Israel's security.

In that conversation, even those participants who favor peace with the Palestinians and have criticized Netanyahu's negotiating tactics drew the line at the administration's effort to set the terms for a continuation of the talks, several of them said.

Tuesday, Albright met with a smaller group of Jewish leaders and apparently made some headway in easing their concerns.

"She was very hopeful that the meeting (with Netanyahu) would be positive, and we came away feeling that the environment is a very healthy one," said Mel Salberg, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

In her Press Club remarks, Albright sought to reassure Israel of US support, placate

critics by convincing them US tactics are in Israel's interest, and charges that Washington is violating past agreements with Israel and persuade Netanyahu to buy the US package.

That package "is not a take-it-or-leave-it deal," she said in response to a question, but "we're not going to water down our ideas."

Clinton had previously authorized Albright to deliver, if necessary, a strong speech in which the US terms—never formally published—would be made public to ratchet up the pressure on Israel. Instead, the speech she delivered Tuesday sought to turn up the heat on Israel while offering Netanyahu, in effect, one more chance to avoid an overt breach.

While she stressed the responsibilities of both Israel and the Palestinians to work harder for peace, her summary of the events of the past year made clear that she holds Israel responsible for the

Continued on page 2



Palestinian refugees in Amman, 1949

## PNA releases schedule for Nakbeh anniversary

TO MARK the 50th anniversary of the Palestinian disaster, Nakbeh, the Palestinian National Authority released the schedule for the main events in the Palestine Authority areas and in the Occupied Territories.

Today, Thursday, according to the schedule, approximately one million Palestinians will take part in the largest-ever march by Palestinians since the loss of their homeland in 1948. Secretariat members have been holding a series of contacts with Palestinian officials and

public figures to insure that ceremonial events take place with utmost success.

The schedule, released Thursday, asked Palestinians throughout the territories to gather at 10:00 am in the main centers of their respective towns and villages. The marches will take place an hour later, starting from the gathering points to destinations designated by the planners.

At 12:00 Palestinian time, mourning sirens will be broadcast through Voice of Palestine

radio, and will also be sounded through megaphones of local mosques. Immediately following the sirens, Palestinians will stand silently for one minute in remembrance of Palestinian and Arab martyrs who fell in the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

The Palestinian national anthem will be played, followed by a speech from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, will later read a special appeal, addressed from the people of Palestine to all nations throughout the world.

On May 14, 1948, the British Mandate came to an end in Palestine. One day later, David Ben Gurion unilaterally proclaimed the Jewish nation. That day, known as the day of Nakbeh, Arabic for "disaster", has since become a mourning day for Palestinians.

This year, half a century after the creation of Israel, more than half of the Palestinian people remain in exile. Their right to return has never been recognized by Israel. Their cause is among a set of issues that both the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel agreed in the Oslo Accords to leave to the final status talks.

Palestinians living inside Israel will also participate in the national mourning day. Their main rally will be held in the demolished village of Safourya in the Galilee. Marchers are expected to come from surrounding areas, including Shafa Amr and Nazareth.

## Algerian food traders thrive in former hardline Islamist area

By Roula Khalaf

THE SHABBY Algiers suburb of La Montagne has long been at the forefront of developments. Once a militant heartland, it is now home to a study network of importers flourishing amid economic reforms.

La Montagne is typical of Algeria's poor neighborhoods, its squalid streets lined with dilapidated housing and half-completed buildings. Such was the violence in this Islamist stronghold a few years ago that even now a dozen policemen must accompany a foreigner there.

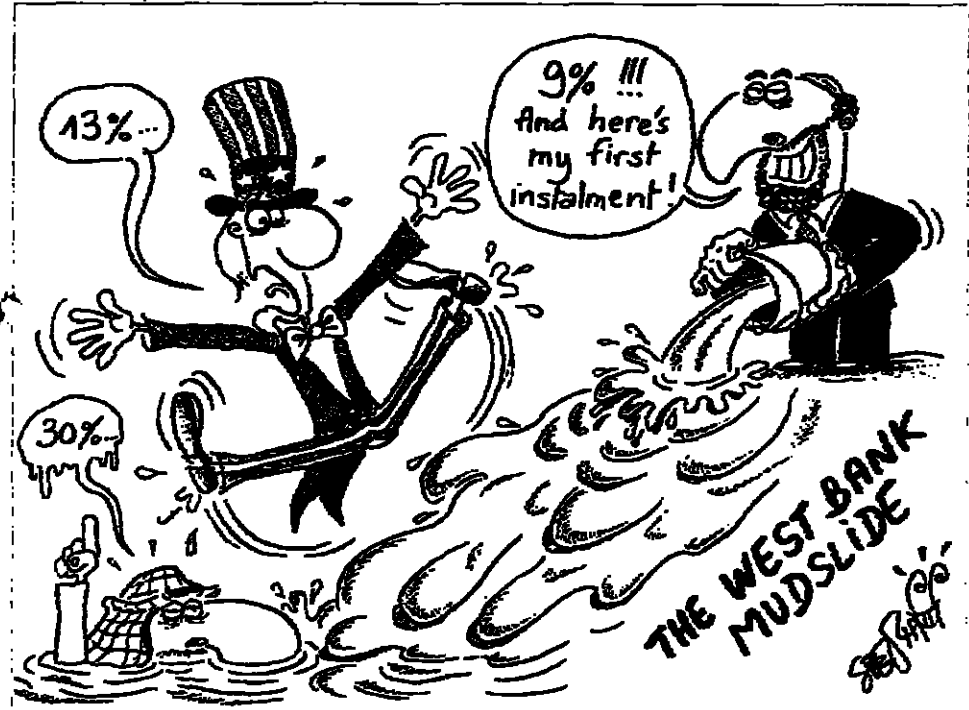
But under the surface of the misery and fear that goes with civil war thrives a trading business that has turned La Montagne (the mountain) into a main exchange for basic food products. Distributors and grocers from all over Algeria flock to the narrow, winding streets of La Montagne, where about 60 wholesalers have set up stores behind nondescript facades.

Not everyone is welcome here. When Bakhti Belaid, Algeria's commerce minister, showed up unexpectedly last week, many businesses shut down for fear of being exposed.

"There are no signs of wealth here because many of the businesses are illegal and the money made here is taken elsewhere," explains one local official.

The food exchange in La Montagne is suspected of being the heart of a shady network of importers and wholesalers making fortunes amid Algeria's anarchy. While some accuse the wholesalers of

Continued on page 2



## GID works to end rise of fanatic elements

By Raed Al Abed

JORDANIAN SECURITY forces may be nearing the end of a clean up campaign targeting "elements aimed at destabilizing the security of Jordan," an official source told The Star.

The campaign, which according to the source started last month, will continue until the Kingdom is purged of these elements.

The fruits of the campaign, led by the General Intelligence Dept (GID), revealed in a short space of time that a militant group was behind a recent spate of bombings that targeted public places and establishments.

During the last two weeks

GID agents rounded up seven Jordanians and are tracking down one Arab, all of whom were allegedly involved in the series of attacks.

The group, whose name was not identified, was described by Acting Minister for Information Nasser Lawzi as "Islamist fundamentalist." During a press conference held last Sunday, Lawzi accused "outside parties" of being behind the group, aiding them both financially and organizationally. The Minister declined to identify the citizenship of the foreign Arab involved, but said that his name was "Abdel Nasser Abu Shanab, of Arab nationality, who is still at large outside the country."

The group's activities resulted in property damage, and although no one was injured in the attacks, they caused considerable concern amongst the public. The series of attacks was launched in late March, the first targeting the Modern American School, where a home-made bomb exploded in its kindergarten. Less than a month later the same group firebombed a highway traffic police station in Wadi El Seer. A week later they set fire to a car belonging to former intelligence chief Mohammad Rasoul Al Kilani.

Later that day the group planted a bomb that exploded

Continued on page 2

### INSIDE



● Jerusalem photos  
page 8

● Divorce rates up  
page 3

● Yemen jaunt  
page 14

## Iran: A global model for population control

By Robin Wright

TEHRAN—Jalal Shahpasand, a tall, husky restaurateur, waited until after dinner and the chaperons had gone off to watch television. After courting "the lovely Jila" for a year, he was ready. So he took her hand and softly asked, "Will you marry me?" Jila nodded.

Javad Goudarzi, a handsome plastics worker with a thick mustache, chose the traditional route to family arrangement. When he met 19-year-old Theahereh the first time, he decided that she was the girl for him. A week later, the proposal was relayed from his parents to her aunt and then to Theahereh. Back through the same route, she accepted.

And so the two couples ended up in a whitewashed health-club classroom last week, waiting for something even more important in

Iran than a marriage license—a slip certifying that they had passed the nation's family planning course.

No one gets married without it. The course is just one aspect of an ambitious campaign to stop what has become one of the world's biggest population surges—one that had almost doubled the number of Iranians since the 1979 Islamic Revolution from 34 million to 63 million today.

The numbers shot up after the new religious government in the late '70s urged Iranian women to breed an Islamic generation. Aided by a lowering of the marriage age to 9, they more than complied.

By the early 1980s, the population growth rate had reached 3.2 percent, according to Iran's Health Ministry. International agencies pegged the rate at up to

3.9 percent, among the world's highest. Either way, the government—aware of the costs of such a large population—is spending millions of dollars a generation later to reverse the trend.

It seems to be working. When the instructor asked how many children each couple plans to have, Jalal and Jila, who together have seven siblings, said, "One."

Javad and Theahereh, who have 13 siblings, said, "Two."

Nationwide, the population growth rate is now down to 1.41 percent. And the fertility rate has dropped to such a staggering rate that wary demographic experts are helping to expand the data base and sampling techniques.

Nonetheless, Iran's campaign has won worldwide praise. Population groups cite it as a model for developing nations and the Islamic bloc. And Washington-based Population Action International bestowed its highest commendation on Iran's program.

Its strength may be its imaginative initiatives. Abbas Farzi, a diminutive truck driver, with the first strands of silver in his hair, showed up early at the "No Scalpel Vasectomy" clinic in south Tehran last week for the 10-minute procedure—and the 30-minute video showing a vasectomy and answering the most-asked questions, plus personal counseling.

"We have two children, and we want to give them a good education, so it was time to make sure we didn't have any more," he said.

Farzi's procedure was one of about 3,500 each year at the facility, which in turn is one of dozens of permanent and mobile clinics in Iran. All are free.

From Norplant to condoms, IUDs to the pill and including both male and female sterilization, birth-control products are free to all takers in another aspect of Iran's program.

In the process, sex has come off the list of taboo subjects in the Islamic Republic.

In health rooms set up in all factories, in schoolrooms, in mosques during Population Week in July, in widespread media coverage and in a blanket advertising campaign that includes billboards and water towers, family planning is discussed widely. The ruling clerics have even issued *fatwas*, or religious edicts, approving it.

The family planning program, often referred to as Tehran's "other revolution," coincided with the end of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War and with broader societal openings as the revolution began to settle down. It also represented a new streak of pragmatism among the country's Shiite Muslim clergy.

Aware that even with its oil wealth Iran would soon not be able to feed, clothe, house, educate and employ the burgeoning numbers, religious leaders, health experts, government officials and acca-

Continued on page 3



## Water your taste buds with a melon

Continued from page 1

the juice" applies. If the flesh is just pink, or even a lighter shade of red, you may indeed be able to wet your throat and quench your thirst, but you haven't truly tasted 'the real thing'.

Lend an ear to the vendor's advice, but as you look at the mouth-watering displays of melons cut in half—the sweet, mouth-watering deep red interior bordered with its whitish-green and refreshingly sour crunchiness—don't listen to a word he says: let your conscience be your guide. Let yourself get into a 'melon head', feel your mouth begin to water and let it lead you where the glow of the deep green skin seems sweetest.

The melon phenomenon flourishes at this time every year. However, this year, the hot weather has made customers particularly hungry for their refreshing taste, and the same weather that produced this thirst has also grown the melons to satisfy it. Melons, to put it mildly, are simply flooding the market.

The over-supply, much to the joy of heavy melon consumers, has caused prices to plummet compared to other seasons. A kilo of melon usually sells for around half a dinar at the beginning of the season, and declines as the supply increases. This year, Mustafa Abu Osha'a, director of the Vegetables and Fruit Central Market, said, "the price for a kilo of melon is down somewhere around 250 to 300 fils."

"We receive between 450 and 500 truckloads of melons everyday; each truck weighs an average of two tons," Abu Osha'a said. "The reason behind the over-supply in the market this year is the heat wave that swept the country last month," he noted, adding that he expected the number of trucks to increase even further as the season progressed.

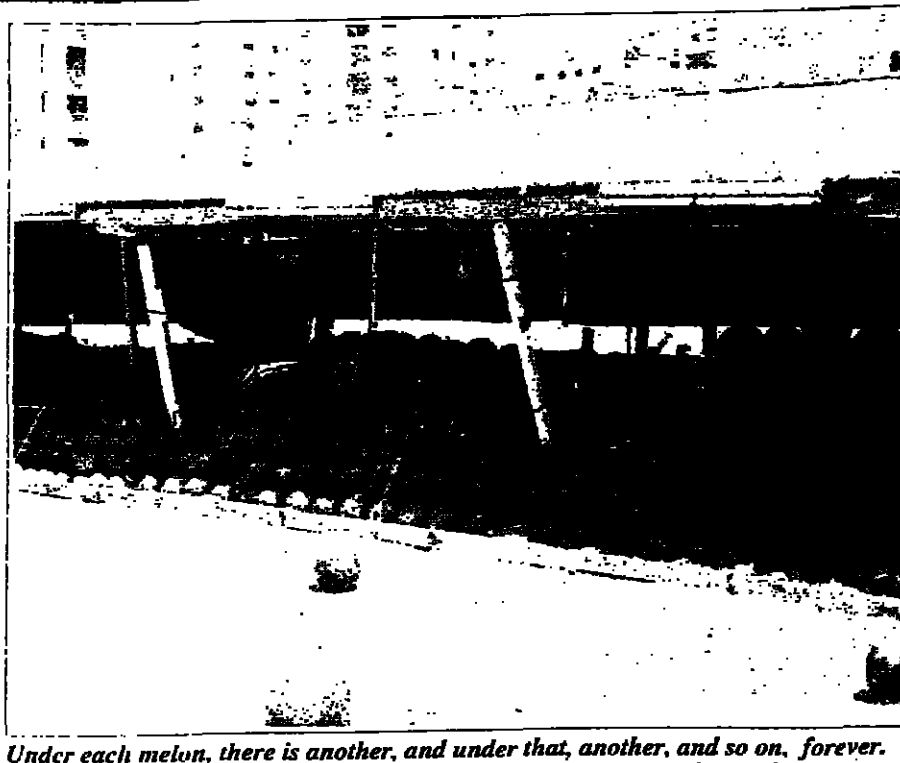
Business is equally as good for individual merchants. Abu Samer, a vendor in Zarka, said, "A truck full of melons comes here every day, weighing nearly two to two-and-a-half tons. He sells a kilo of melons for 200 fils and people are

flocking in an amazingly large numbers, buying five to six whole melons each.

And, contrary to what you might expect for so low a price, the melons this year are unusually sweet—even the little ones that couldn't be allowed to reach full size because of the nature of the market and the need to sell them quick.

The question is, what do you do with melons beside munching on them, sucking up the juice and spitting out the seeds? One vendor told *The Star* that the melon glut provides "a good opportunity for housewives. I've bought 10 melons myself, each weighing 7 kilos, so that my wife can make a delicious jam from the inside white crust of the melon, which all of my children adore. I've even been known to eat a little of it myself," he said with a sly smile and a wink.

So, if you've got just two things—a hankering for melons and a quarter of a dinar that you just can't help but spend, there is, like they say, "no time like the present" to accomplish both in one tell swoop: see you at the local melon tent!



Under each melon, there is another, and under that, another, and so on, forever.

## For the Record

### Aziz arrives in Amman en route to France

AMMAN (Petra)—Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz arrived in Amman Monday en route to France in the course of a European tour.

Aziz was received at the airport by Acting Foreign Minister Talal Sata'an Al Hassan, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'id Sahhaf and the Iraqi Ambassador to Amman.

Sahhaf is currently on a visit to Jordan for talks with Jordanian officials on issues of mutual interest. He met His Majesty King Hussein Sunday and handed him a letter from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Baghdad's endeavours to lift the eight-year-old UN sanctions.

### Majali meets Sahhaf

AMMAN (Petra)—Prime Minister Dr Abdul Salam Majali received on Sunday the Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'id Sahhaf and his accompanying delegation in the presence of Acting Foreign Minister Talal Sata'an Al Hassan.

Sahhaf briefed Majali on Iraq's relations with the UN Security Council and the Special Commission entrusted to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, as well as its current move to explain the nature of these relations.

He said that Iraqi fully implemented all the agreements with the UN and called on the Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq after the Gulf War.

Sahhaf stressed the importance of the Jordanian role under the leadership of His Majesty King Hussein in working towards lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq.

The Iraqi Minister expressed hope that Jordan's role would contribute to ending sanctions this year.

The Prime Minister for his part affirmed Jordan's strong stand in supporting efforts that aim to lift the sanctions so that Iraq can resume its role both regionally and internationally.

### RJ to sell five Tri-stars as part of privatization

AMMAN (Petra)—Royal Jordanian (RJ) has reached an initial accord to sell its five Tri-stars to an American airline company as part of its restructuring process and to modernize its fleet for future privatization.

"We have received a good offer, in a letter of intent from the US firm to buy the five Tri-stars (Lockheed 11011) and three spare engines and a portion of the spare parts," Nader Dahabi, RJ President and Chief Executive said in a press conference Saturday. He expected a final accord on the deal to be signed within a month.

Dahabi said the reason for selling the five planes is their high operation costs. He added that it is sometimes difficult to get spare parts for the planes.

The transaction would improve RJ's financial status and modernize its 17-plane fleet by replacing the Tristars obtained in the 1980s with either four or five leased Airbus A 320s and A 310s, Dahabi noted.

He affirmed that the sale of the Tristars would not affect the situation of RJ flight crews or that of the air crews or ground services.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

## GID works to end rise of fanatic elements

Continued from page 1

in a garbage container opposite the house of former interior minister Jawad Al Shbeilat.

In addition, on 30 June, a bomb was placed under a car belonging to an Arab-Israeli in the parking lot of the five-star Jerusalem Hotel. The explosion caused damage to a number of other cars, but fortunately no one was hurt in the incident. The Jerusalem Hotel attack took place only hours after the Israeli embassy held a reception at a nearby hotel marking the 50th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the state of Israel.

Tens of people were rounded up for questioning over the last two weeks, many from Palestinian refugee camps, as well as from radical Palestinian factions, including opponents of Yasser Arafat.

Police manned security checkpoints at main roads and plain clothes security officers searched cars and checked identity cards. Additional

security measures were put in place at ministries and official institutions, as well as at foreign missions and embassies.

In the past three years, Jordan has witnessed an increase in the number of fanatical groups who have adopted violent means to express their rejection of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

However, even before the peace treaty, in the summer of 1994, a group of Jordanians who fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation were rounded up by security agents for carrying out attacks in movie houses that reportedly showed pornography, in which a number of people were injured.

The people that comprised the tiny and short-lived group, which was later named "Jordan's Afghan," were put on trial, found guilty, and initially sentenced to death. The sentence was later reduced to life imprisonment.

Since the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace accords in 1994 these groups have increased, particularly during 1995 and 1996.

At the top of the list of fanatical groups is one named "Bayat Al Emam." The small membership of this fundamentalist group was arrested by security forces two years ago on charges of planning a coup against the state, as well as attacks against Jordanian and Israeli targets.

The security forces seized a sizable quantity of weapons and explosive materials hidden in the homes of members of the group.

In the middle of last year, Bayat Al Emam resurfaced when security forces arrested five suspects on charges of reviving the illegal organization.

In late 1996, activities of another group, Jaysh Mohammad, were thwarted. Members of the group were arrested before they were able to put their plans to attack Israeli tourists and Jordanian security personnel into action. They were later found guilty and

sentenced to prison terms of varying lengths.

In light of the recent attacks in Jordan, it might be recalled that in 1996 the government of Abdel Karim Al Kabbari disclosed that during the first three months of that year, security forces thwarted 36 plots aimed at destabilizing the Kingdom. At that time all fingers pointed north, since those who were arrested belonged to Palestinian rejectionist groups based in Syria.

During his visit to Syria in the middle of 1996, His Majesty King Hussein discussed with Syrian President Hafez Assad an alleged 51 terrorist attacks attempted in Jordan by armed men crossing from Syria into the Kingdom.

The purported attacks occurred during the two years immediately following the signing of the peace accord.

The alleged perpetrators planned to assassinate senior officials, store explosives that would be used at a later time and attack Israeli tourists.

At the time, President Assad denied that his country encouraged such acts and promised follow up investigations.

Official sources told *The Star* that Jordanian security forces rounded up late last month a small group of Islamist activists consisting of two Jordanians and one Lebanese who had adopted the name Hizbollah, the Lebanese anti-Israel resistance group.

The three members of the group, who planned attacks against targets similar to those of the other groups, are now standing before the State Security Court's prosecutor.

Meanwhile, security forces are doing their utmost to end the activities of these groups in Jordan. Mr Lawzi said that security measures taken in the past weeks to insure public safety will continue until the security department decides they are no longer necessary.

Mr Lawzi said that the seven Jordanian suspects in the recent attacks are currently standing in front of the General Prosecutor.

Further, she said, the administration has observed in recent months "a concerted Palestinian effort...against those who would threaten peace with terror and violence," which had been a key Israeli demand. The Palestinians have made that effort, she noted pointedly, even without Israeli agreement on the next phase of negotiations.

Albright did not say specifically what would happen if Wednesday's meeting fails to produce a breakthrough. "We are not giving any ultimatums," she said. But she said the parties "must understand" that the goodwill that suffused the Middle East two years ago—that is, before Netanyahu's election—has dissipated and that the negotiating impasse must be broken "before the peace process collapses."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Albright calls for Israeli flexibility

Continued from page 1

deadlock.

"We have given the parties many weeks to consider our ideas in private. We did not launch a public campaign on their behalf," she said—a reticence that complied with Israeli wishes. "And in response primarily to Israeli requests, we allowed more time and then more time and then more time for our suggestions to be studied, considered and discussed."

She said the US "ideas" had also "posed some very difficult choices for the Palestinians." They were required to make substantial changes in their negotiating position by reducing their demands for a much larger hand-over of land. "Nevertheless, Chairman Arafat agreed to our ideas in principle," Albright said.

Furthermore, she said, the administration has observed in recent months "a concerted Palestinian effort...against those who would threaten peace with terror and violence," which had been a key Israeli demand. The Palestinians have made that effort, she noted pointedly, even without Israeli agreement on the next phase of negotiations.

Albright did not say specifically what would happen if Wednesday's meeting fails to produce a breakthrough. "We are not giving any ultimatums," she said. But she said the parties "must understand" that the goodwill that suffused the Middle East two years ago—that is, before Netanyahu's election—has dissipated and that the negotiating impasse must be broken "before the peace process collapses."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Algerian food traders thrive in former hardline Islamist area

Continued from page 1

making deals among themselves to raise prices for consumers, others say La Montagne is merely a front for big importers who use their financial clout and political links to regulate prices by deliberately creating shortages.

Mohammed, a wholesaler in La Montagne, says the neighborhood has an unfairly bad reputation in Algeria because many residents are illiterate and have been in the forefront of political developments. Residents claim to have been the first to take to the streets in October 1988 when mass protests ushered in four years of political liberalism. At the time, La Montagne was a small hub for smugglers operating in the shadow of Socialist-style economic management.

Like many of Algeria's poor neighborhoods, La Montagne was then drawn to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), being home to one of the FIS leaders.

Then, when the army in 1992 cancelled the elections the FIS was set to win, some people in La Montagne took up arms. They became "mujahideens" to the local population, and "terrorists" to the Algerian regime.

But politics did not destroy the trade, or prevent partnerships between ideological enemies. By 1995, security forces could claim to be in relative control of the area, although shooting still breaks out today. Algeria's economic reforms, meanwhile, began dismantling state import monopolies, paving the way for an army of private importers.

"We are back to being a paradise of trade," says Mohammed. "But don't think there is a free market here. We are at the mercy of the importers."

Mohammed's young brother explains that he recently helped an importer finance the shipment of a European brand of

margarine, which he sold from his store in La Montagne. But he claims the importer cheated him out of his share, and when he tried to import margarine on his own, the shipment was blocked at the port.

"The big importers are like a gang. They have the power to prevent others from bringing in products," he says. "They can hold off distribution and raise prices but the government comes to take taxes from us while they let the big importers off."

Belaid is known in Algeria to be fighting a difficult battle, be it against shadowy importers or illegal wholesalers.

He has described Algeria's markets as a "garbage bin" and says some importers were found to be bringing in food products after their expiration date, while others would declare ridiculously low prices for television sets coming through the port.

While some politicians in Algeria warn that the civil strife is consolidating a long legacy of corruption and shady business dealings, Belaid says such perverse effects are a natural phase in economic liberalization and should not negate

the benefits of reforms.

"The scarcity of some products today does not compare with the severe shortages of the past," he says. "But there is a natural perturbation of the market during a period of transition."

Financial Times Syndication

## Shbeilat sentenced

LEITH SHBEILAT was sentenced by the State Security Court to a nine month prison sentence on Tuesday for inciting pro-Iraqi protests in Maan.

"It has been shown clearly that the proven incidents constitute the elements of the crime of illegal incitement, not just the right of expression, and deserve punishment," said Col Youssef Faouri, head of the three-man tribunal at the State Security Court, said Tuesday.

Shbeilat, former president of Jordan's Engineers Union, was arrested in February and charged with inciting hundreds of Jordanians to demonstrate illegally in solidarity with Iraq at the height of a UN-Iraq crisis.

The court said it had no doubt his "inflammatory speeches" at a mosque in Maan in the south of the Kingdom triggered the two days of civil unrest.

His defence lawyer Hussein Majali told reporters after the sentence that Shbeilat's charge should have carried a four-month maximum prison term. He did not say why the court passed the nine month verdict.

Inciting riots is a felony that is punishable by up to a year in jail.

Chief Judge Faouri said Shbeilat's speech had incited hundreds of residents to violate the law by playing on their nationalist fervour at the height of the crisis.

## British Midland Airways reports tripled profits

British Midland Airways reported record profits and strong growth in passenger numbers and revenue for the year ending December 31, 1997.

Key highlights of the year include:

Turnover increased 11 percent to £529.3 million (1996: £478.2 million). Pre-tax profits almost tripled to £17.3 million (1996: £6.1 million). The total number of scheduled passengers

carried by British Midland increased by seven percent to 5.7 million passengers (1996: 5.3 million).

1997 saw continuing investment in the airline's premium product "Diamond EuroClass" which has brought improved revenues, yields and market share throughout the European and UK domestic network.

British Midland also benefited from its code-sharing arrangements with 17 international carriers at Heathrow—adding routes to Scandinavia and Germany.

The first 1996 seat Airbus A321 aircraft will enter service this month, beginning deliveries to the airline of a \$1 billion order for 22 aircraft placed last year with Airbus Industrie.

Sir Michael Bishop, chairman said, "The British Midland results reflect a far more satisfactory level of profitability in 1997, with passenger growth above the industry average."

This performance has been achieved at a time of unprecedented competition in the market place—especially from new low cost carriers. "In specific markets where we compete directly with these new airlines, our product both for business and leisure travellers has proved

particularly resilient, and we have increased both passenger carryings and yields on a number of routes."

Speaking at a press conference in London, Sir Michael also announced that British Midland will commence a daily return flight from London Heathrow to Warsaw starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

particularly resilient, and we have increased both passenger carryings and yields on a number of routes."

Speaking at a press conference in London, Sir Michael also announced that British Midland will commence a daily return flight from London Heathrow to Warsaw starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

The service, to be operated by a Boeing 737-500, will feature British Midland's premium business class product, Diamond EuroClass, and in line with the airline's policy will offer reduced business and leisure fares. The Schedule, subject to a Polish operating permit, will feature an early morning departure from London Heathrow and a late morning return from Warsaw, starting on July 10, 1998.

### Fraud at embassy

AMMAN (Star)—The British Embassy in Amman has been beset by another fraud scandal, a parliamentary report in London revealed Tuesday. The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.

The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.

The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.

The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.

The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.

The Public Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons pointed out that the deception involved an accountant who submitted double invoices for stationery, petrol, telephone, telex, telegraph and water bills. It was reported that a local accountant stole at least \$180,000 in 300 separate cases of fraud. It is suggested that the man was stealing for years. This is the second case of fraud to occur at the embassy in less than a year. Last year, the committee heard evidence of how another accountant at the embassy forged life insurance certificates and cashed \$550,000 dollars of cheques for dead British pensioners.</



## JORDAN

## W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

## New weapons law

A new firearms law is to be presented to the next session of the Lower House according to the Minister of Interior Nuthir Rasheed. The draft possession of arms law will aim to control weapons in the Kingdom while at the same time respecting individual freedoms as well as providing for internal security. Rasheed says the new law will only allow the use of weapons in certain cases such as those of self-defence. But while the draft law is certainly a noble idea, its implementation could be hard to achieve, since the possession of firearms in the country is widespread. Having said that, the fact remains that the new draft could certainly provide a deterrent to the persistent shooting at wedding ceremonies, where countless lives are lost every year.



Rasheed

## Penal

A new penal draft law is currently being prepared by the Ministry of Justice, to be forwarded to the Council of Ministers, and then to the Lower House. The draft law will redefine the concept of crime; the penalty for different types of crimes and more clearly define what constitutes a political crime. It is the last type that is particularly interesting among commentators, since the draft may not only define political crime, but could in addition limit what is politically criminal, and possibly delineate the penalty that would apply. The draft law will also abolish hard labor as it is presently defined. However, penalties against violence involving children and women will increase.

## Brotherhood

The Islamic movement may be coming into the news again after taking a backseat for a couple of months. This time the attention is directed to the elections of the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood, which are likely to take place next month. It is suggested that a possible struggle for the next Islamic leadership is not a far-fetched idea, and that the current Overseer of the Brotherhood, Abdel Majed Thuneibat, may very well be on the way out. At the heart of the debate, it is suspected, concerns the role of the Islamic Brotherhood in the political system. Will they "stay out" of parliamentary life, do they want to get back in, and if so, how will they go about it.

## Communists

It seems that the problems in the Communist Party are nowhere near to being solved. Party negotiators are still working on the idea of getting the new Secretary General, Muntaz Hamamneh, to sit with Yacoub Zayadin, who still feels sour about having been ousted from his post in last year's elections. However, Zayadin says that there are fundamental problems in the party which are still to be ironed out. He wants a special conference by the party to address them. On a personal level, it seems that Zayadin's problems could be just beginning. He is being taken to court by his long-time comrade Emily Nafa'a for what she says is slander.

Zayadeen

## Politically aware

Just as the Lower House of Parliament gears up for a new extraordinary session, so too deputies are putting their house in order. They are now in the middle of step by step negotiations to reform the existent parliamentary blocs. All leaders of the current formations seem to be involved, and include: Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Al Sroor, Abdel Hadi Al Majali, Ali Abu Al Ragheb, and Ragheb Al Bakri.

## Telephones

Hold your horses, don't get too excited, but your telephone bill could be on the way down. Minister of Transport and Communication says that his ministry is studying the possibility of decreasing the rate for local and international phone calls. While there are no promises yet, at least the government is thinking about it. Whatever the case, there would likely be a new system of tariffs by the end of the day.

## Medical view

Jordan's Medical Association (JMA) is angry with Jordanian universities for employing non-Jordanian medical doctors and nurses as part of their academic staff. They also resent the fact that these medical staff are employed without the approval of the JMA, don't have their medical degrees certified or don't need a license to practice medicine in the country. Head of the Medical Association Dr Bassem Al Dajani has already sent a memo to Labor Minister Dr Mohammad Mahdi Al Farhan expressing his dismay. He said that the employment of doctors who are not registered with the JMA is against the law.

## Rally

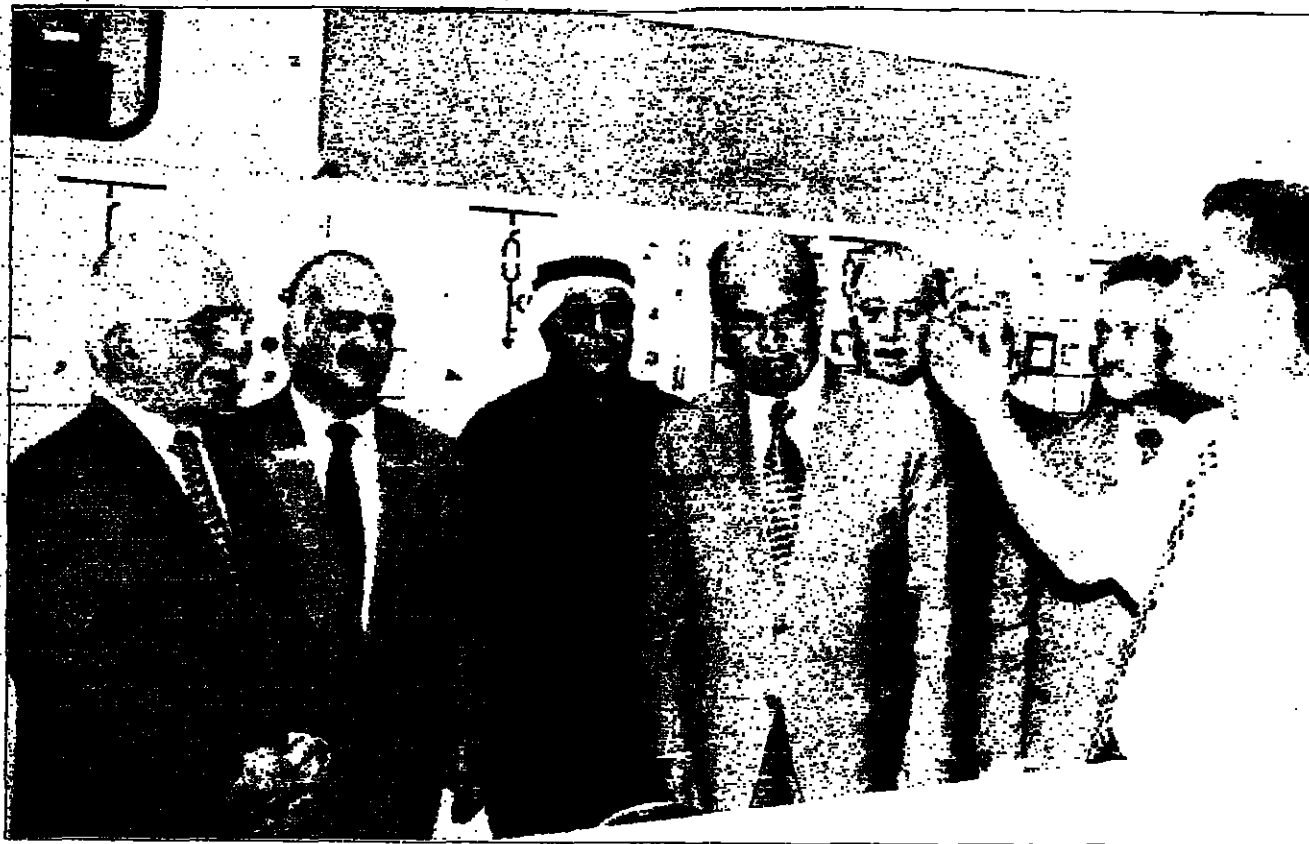
Opposition parties are to organize a rally to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The rally will be held on 5 June. In a recent meeting of the parties' joint higher committee, they called on NGOs, civic groups, and ordinary people to carry out activities in remembrance of the loss of Palestine, the anniversary of which is Friday, 15 May.

## Press

The Press and Publication Dept has decided to ban Al Quds Al Arabi from entry into the country. The company in Amman which distributes the daily newspaper has already sent a letter to its management in London asking them to stop sending the newspaper to Jordan.

## UNRWA

Workers in the United Nations Works and Relief Agency in Amman are to stop work today, Thursday, in protest of the 50th anniversary of the loss of Palestine. Also, schools run by UNRWA are to stop work for an hour, a period that is being devoted to discussions of the Palestinian issue.



His Majesty King Hussein inaugurating the opening of the Karamah Dam Tuesday, accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Dr Abdel Salam Majali, Minister of Water Munthir Hadadin and other senior officials. The King said that Jordan will spare no effort to meet the water needs of all Jordanians and to ensure sufficient water resources for industry, agriculture and other purposes. King Hussein described the dam as a major achievement that can be added to the country's many other significant accomplishments. The dam, 45 meters high and 2150 meters long, has been constructed at a total cost of about JD 51 million. It is equipped with facilities to pump water to the King Abdullah Canal to irrigate an area of 60,000 dunums in the Jordan Valley. Having a capacity to store up to 55 million cubic meters of rain water, the Karamah Dam was built to be quake resistant and can withstand tremors known to affect the Jordan Rift Valley region.

Unemployment, family disapproval are major factors

## Divorce is on the rise

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Star Staff Writer

IN ONLY her 20th year, Simona sat quietly but sad while she fed her only son, Omar, age three, at the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) in the department called Dar Al Diafeh, which provides a place where separated couples can visit their children.

"I can see my child one day a week, but I wish it were 24 hours a day. I can stay with him now for only three hours, and then I have to leave," said Simona Doreneanu.

A Romanian who was recently divorced from a Jordanian doctor.

"I met my ex-husband when he came to study in Romania. After we got married, we returned to Jordan, but his

family didn't accept me," Doreneanu continued. "Since my husband is the eldest son, he's supposed to stay at his parents' house and to take care of his younger brothers and sisters."

Simona refused to go back to live with her husband's family when she realized that she was an undesirable person. The only solution was divorce.

This case is one among thousands. When a couple separates, it isn't just a two-person dilemma—whole families are involved, and the aftermath of a separation often tears them apart.

"Motives behind divorce vary from one case to another, but social and economic (unemployment) factors are paramount," said Hikmal Halaseh, President of Dar Al

Diafeh and a member of the executive committee of the JWU. "If the husband is unemployed that means he is completely dependent on his father. This situation allows the father to intervene freely in his son's life," Halaseh continued.

The latest study carried out by Strategic Studies Center at the University of Jordan indicated that the rate of unemployment in 1996 was 22 percent. In light of these figures, it is evident that the negative effects of unemployment could play a role in the increasing divorce rate.

To show how serious the problem is, statistics provided by Dr Ismail Abu Sundus speak clearly (see chart).

"We also noticed that divorce increased among educated people (it reached 5947 cases in 1995) while decreasing among illiterate couples, to 368," Halaseh commented.

The absence of mental harmony due to the traditional marriage—which doesn't allow the young man and woman to know each other before they are wed—is the main reason, Halaseh said.

That's why a high percentage of divorces occurs in the first two years of marriage, which is considered the most critical period for beginning couples.

"We submit the separated

couple to conductive sessions and we succeeded in getting nine families back to their normal lives," said Mukarram Oudeh, a social specialist in Dar Al Diafeh.

"To reduce the high figures of divorce in Jordan, I believe that the certificate (education) will be the first step towards independence from the family's authority," Oudeh said. In the meantime, JWU started a campaign on the first of April aimed at increasing the age of marriage to 18. The policy of JWU essentially conforms with the International Agreement for Children's Rights, which defines childhood as the period between the ages of 0-18.

"When a woman is divorced, she only wants to know whether it's revocable or irrevocable," said Mona Zugbabe, a lawyer who has

direct contact with many divorced couples. A revocable divorce is not final.

"In the marriage contract, it's rare to find any term which protects the life of the woman, especially in an abusive divorce," Zugbabe said. She went on to explain that in such cases, the only compensation a woman is entitled to receive depends on the financial status of her husband.

And what happens to the children in the case of a divorce? "The guardianship goes to the mother until the age of maturity. At that time girls are obliged to go back to their fathers," while boys can choose," Zugbabe said. She called on the government to implement divorce by verdict, taking into account the interests of the whole family rather than being based solely on the man's decision.

### Divorce statistics at five year intervals:

The year	Number of cases	The number of families
1981	2505	383.2 thousand
1985	3687	405.3 thousand
1990	5074	536.1 thousand
1995	6315	691.3 thousand

## Iran: A global model for population control

Continued from page 1

demics held a summit to figure out what to do. Simply providing birth control was not enough, they agreed.

By 1990, the Fertility Regulation Council was established. By 1993, new laws withdrew food coupons and subsidized health insurance after the third child. And then came the array of programs, which, unlike India's sometimes coercive tactics, are user-friendly, outside experts say.

The two-hour pre-nuptial class was one of the first steps in 1984.

"At first we used the trick of requiring couples to take the course," said Safieh Shahriari, a female gynecologist and senior family planning expert in the Health Ministry. "But after a year or two, we found most couples wanted to take the course. It's a place to ask questions at exactly the time they need answers."

In the clinic classroom, instructor Abol Foz Mohajeri offered no-nonsense guidance.

"What's the goal of getting married?" he asked the betrothed couples.

The answers varied from having an independent life and completing the human experience to fulfilling the Prophet Muhammad's message.

"Yes," said Mohajeri, adding what the others won't say: "But it's also about having regular sex."

He then explained the various environmental consequences of overpopulation and did an explicit show-and-tell of birth-control devices.

"And what do you want from God?" he continued. Jila responded that she wants healthy children.

"Yes, that's right. It's not

important whether buy or girl," he offered.

Iran's program has emphasized gender equality to prevent the problem of male preference found elsewhere in Asia.

Despite Iran's marriage age, which family planning experts here want to return to 15, the program also stresses that pregnancy before age 20 is not recommended. An accompanying pamphlet shows caricatures of a young teen-ager and an old woman at full term.

To reach workers, who have the lowest participation in family planning, the Islamic Republic has set up education workshops in factory health rooms, which are also distribution centers for free contraceptives.

Nationwide, Iran holds its annual Population Week, which coincides with the UN-designated Population Day on July 11. All segments of society are engaged.

"We ask religious leaders to tell people when they are praying about the effectiveness of population control in dealing with social and economic development," Shahriari said.

"Other Islamic countries are often surprised at how the religious leaders support us."

During the week, elementary through high schools focus on population issues in environmental classes developed jointly by the Health and Education ministries. To encourage media coverage, Iran's program offers free trips for the largely Tehran-based media to Isfahan and Shiraz, the historic centers of famed Iranian poetry, art and architecture, to cover family planning activities.

Year-round, Iran also recruits female volunteers who

act as neighborhood advisers about family health and planning techniques. "If neighbors are just starting a new life, a volunteer tells them about nutrition, cancer screening and care. For a family with four children, she might tell them about vasectomy and the benefits of population control."

To reach remote mountain villages and rural tribal areas, Iran has 80 mobile teams, which have evolved from health workers who consulted on contraceptives to medical units—surgeons, anesthesiologists, lab technicians and nurses—that now travel by four-wheel-drive vehicles or helicopters to perform vasectomies or tubal ligation.

As a Muslim country, Iran has had some unusual problems to deal with along the way.

"Norplant, for example, can cause some bleeding, and Muslim women can't pray when they're bleeding. So people don't like it," Shahriari noted.

And the system still has serious glitches. Despite pervasive family planning options, about 33 percent of pregnancies are still unwanted by one or both partners, a recent government survey shows. And among unwanted pregnancies, 35 percent take oral contraceptives, indicating that they are misused or not understood.

But even success does not eliminate the dangers. Even if the government meets its objectives, Iran's population is still projected to reach 90 million in less than 25 years.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

### For Sale

Original Orientalist Lithographs by David Roberts, Delacroix, Fromentin, Vernet, Diaz and others. Views of Jerusalem, Lebanon and Holy Land. Also 19th century engravings by WH Barlett. For information call Telefax: 5664805

okaz  
RESTAURANT

### Universal Buffet...



### Affordable Luxury...

JD 10++

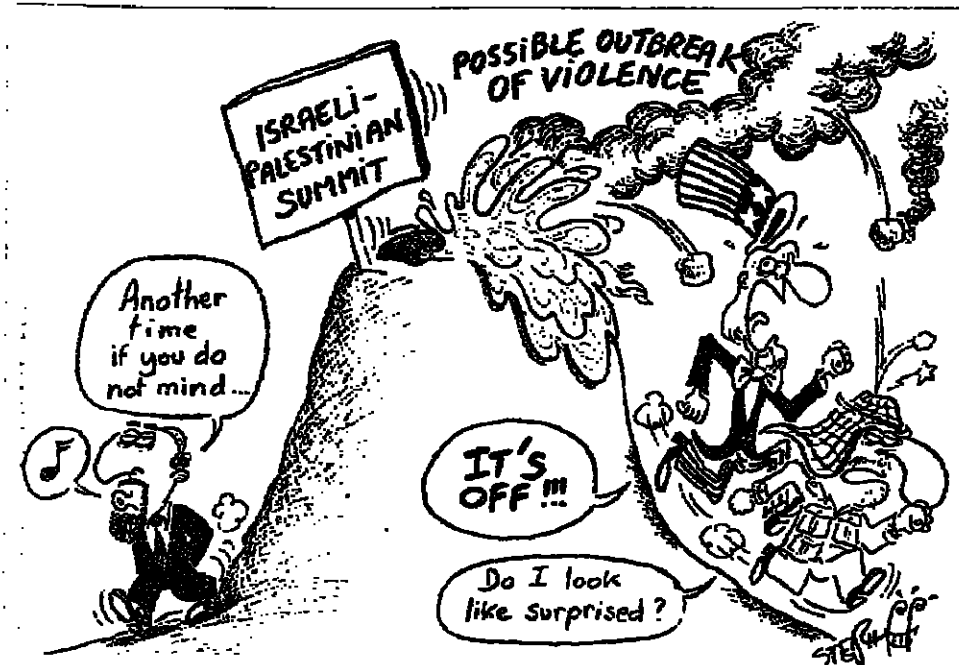
Offering a new tasty selection of quality Arabic and Continental dishes

Ask for the Universal Buffet on 464 1361 ext. 2309

HOTEL  
INTER-CONTINENTAL  
JORDAN







## Our Say...

### The US should not back off

THE CLINTON administration has once again backed down from a possible confrontation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over Israel's acceptance of a new round of troop redeployments from the Occupied Territories. Special US envoy Dennis Ross has failed to convince a defiant Netanyahu to change his mind and fly to Washington for a meeting with Clinton and Arafat. The meeting, which was called for after last week's botched London conference, was postponed until later this month. But it doesn't seem likely that the Israeli government will tone down its position and accept the US conditions. The Middle East peace process reached its moment of truth some time ago, although Washington refuses to name Israel as the guilty party. No wonder that Netanyahu has emerged stronger in the eyes of his hawkish constituency from this latest round of diplomatic flurries, leaving the Clinton administration without a clear strategy.

Netanyahu has detected Clinton's lack of resolve and is now vying to take his case directly to the American people, in particular to Jewish lobbies and power dealers in Washington. This leaves the Middle East peace process in a state of limbo, and with Netanyahu taking the battle to Washington, the Palestinians will soon be cut off from the game altogether.

Where will all this lead? Netanyahu's objectives are clear. In fact, he is the only player who has not swerved from his public mandate. If his aim was to reverse and topple the Oslo agreement, then there is no reason now to discredit his achievement. He has managed to buy time, build up his offensive, lie, cheat and embarrass the US government, leaving it without a viable option to keep the peace process on track. In the meantime, he has literally thrown Israel's agreements with the Palestinians out the window.

These agreements are no longer in place as points of reference in the current negotiations, just as the previous governments were able to by-pass UN resolutions on the Palestine question. These developments do not bode well for the region. If the peace process is dead, then what are we left with? Almost seven years have passed since the Arabs and Israelis met in Madrid at the urging of the Americans, who spelled out their own rules for participation. The UN and the Europeans were side-stepped and ignored. The peace process was a far cry from the international conference that was to be convened to discuss peace under UN resolutions. But the peace process held many promises to the people of this region, in spite of US and Israeli conditions. Today these promises appear impossible to achieve. The US, as a world leader, must act now to rescue the region from the mad and criminal policies of the Israeli leadership. Backing off now will wipe out the last hope for a peaceful settlement of a decades-old conflict that has denied the people of this region their right to live in dignity.



Ramsey Clark (right), and one of his helpers unload a 4 million dollar medical shipment sent to the Iraqi people, Saturday.

## The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Media Services International (Info-Media).  
Editorial & Advertising: Telephones 4652-380, 4645-380, Fax 4649-298.  
P.O. Box 9313, Postal Code 11191 Amman - Jordan, email: Star@arabia.com  
URL: http://www.star-arabia.com

### Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Osama El-Sherif  
Managing Editor  
Dr Marwan Al Asmar  
Editorial Team

Stephen Ellis (Editor), Raed Al Abed (Home News Editor),

Ilham Sadeq (Economic Editor),

Yannick Lainé (French Editor), Zeid Nasser (Technology Editor),

### Management & Production

Mahmoud Fares (General Administration), Qurban Hussain (Production),

Ali Nimer (Accountant), Zaki Qurban (Layout),

Mahmoud Shawkat (Archive)

The Star is serviced by LA Times-Washington Post News Service, Cartoonists International (Laurie cartoons), PANOS, The WorldPaper, Editors Press Service, STILLS and by correspondents in the United States and South Asia.  
Member of The International Advertising Association

Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 20, Arab countries US\$ 100, W. Europe US\$ 150, USA & Canada US\$ 200.

Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

# US interests on confrontational course with Israel

By Barton Gellman

WASHINGTON—On the short list of foreign policies bearing President Clinton's personal stamp, the role of peace broker in the Middle East ranks near the top.

Clinton's encompassing embrace of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House South Lawn, the day they reached mutual recognition in 1993, was an emotional high point of his first term. The president went two years later at news of Rabin's slaying, and he keeps a pebble from the Israeli leader's grave. According to advisers, Clinton can come out the votes inside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's intricate governing coalition as well as any congressional roll call.

Now Clinton's relationship with Israel has reached a turning point. After months of worrying that the peace talks were near collapse—and assigning Netanyahu, in private, the lion's share of the blame—the president and his senior advisers have set a reluctant course of confrontation with Israel's premier.

For several reasons—temperament and politics among them, but also to protect an opening for Netanyahu to back down—Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright are speaking softly of the test of wills. But senior aides to both of them insist that the administration is prepared to turn the heat up if Netanyahu continues to resist US proposals to break the impasse in his talks with Arafat.

Last Sunday the Israeli cabinet rejected a US plan combining Palestinian security measures and withdrawal of Israeli forces from another 13 percent of the West Bank. In London last week, Albright set Monday as the deadline for Netanyahu to agree to the American package.

Otherwise, she said, "we will have to reexamine our approach to the peace process."

Backing that threat, according to administration officials, is a presidential decision authorizing Albright to make a blunt speech describing the American proposals and declaring an end to active US mediation until Israel, like the Palestinians, accepts them.

Analysts insist the president has committed himself and intends to see his challenge through.

"There's no question in my mind that the administration is determined to bring this phase to a conclusion in a short number of days," said one participant in planning for the public showdown. "Not weeks. Days."

Said another senior official: "The president feels very strongly that the peace process is one of the highest priorities in his administration. He's prepared to do everything he can to get this process going again, and that includes taking a little heat."

Clinton never sought confrontation with Israel, and political advisers to Vice President Gore are anxious about it in light of the outsized influence of American Jews on Democratic Party politics and political spending. But the White House sees even greater risks in the deadlock that led Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk to testify last month that "the strategic window for peacemaking is now closing."

"There's a very real danger that acts of violence will escalate and produce a breakdown in the whole process that began in Oslo and Madrid," said one official, referring to negotiating milestones in 1993 and 1991. "It is in both Israel's interest and US regional interests that we avoid that explosion."

The reference to American interests is the key to understanding Clinton's behavior, according to some officials. There is no other adequate answer to Israel's insistence that its own government is the best judge of Israeli security. As the peace talks have declined, officials said, so has American influence in the Middle East and so too have the fortunes of local leaders—in Egypt, Jordan, North Africa and the Gulf—who allied themselves with the United States.

Clinton long asserted that the United States wished only to be a "facilitator" for direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians. But that role shifted dramatically within six months of Netanyahu's election in 1996. It was Netanyahu himself, ironically, who invited the Americans to play a larger role.

After four days of gun bat-

ties between Palestinian and Israeli forces that September, sparked by Netanyahu's opening of an archaeological tunnel in Jerusalem under the edge of the Temple Mount, the US peace team led by Ross for the first time began to participate in nearly every meeting between the two sides. It was not long before Ross was drafting "non-papers" reflecting tentative agreements, and only another smart step to preparing American "ideas" for breaking

but that was in effect what it had become.

The US ideas began with a 13 percent withdrawal from the West Bank, to be conducted in three stages over 12 weeks and synchronized with Palestinian measures such as handing over a complete list of Palestinian police to Israel and arresting specified leaders of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. There would also be a "time out" on unilateral Israeli settlement activity such

crease the connections between existing islands of Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank.

"We can enhance the continuity of (Palestinian)-controlled areas so that Palestinians can travel from north to south without encountering as many Israeli security checks such as roadblocks," Netanyahu wrote to Clinton. "The qualitative improvement would compensate for the quantitative limitations."

The two men spoke by telephone that week, and Clinton refused to budge.

When Albright first made her London remarks last week, according to Israeli officials, Netanyahu was at first inclined to accept the invitation to Washington and the American plan that went with it. Israel's embassy on Van Ness Street was frantically searching for hotel space. But by Thursday, one Israeli said, "things were starting to turn."

One major factor was Netanyahu's infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, a formidable patron of West Bank settlers who was visiting Washington when Albright held her news conference in London.

Suspecting that the prime minister might accept Clinton's deal, Sharon tracked down colleagues around the world—he found Communications Minister Limor Livnat in Australia, Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan in South Korea—to rally them behind a vote of defiance.

Clinton's demand for a 13 percent withdrawal, Sharon argued, would require one of three unacceptable choices: giving up early warning radar sites that look eastward toward Iraq; exposing the eastern air approach to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport; or relinquishing full control of the major aquifer that lies just over the edge of Israel's pre-1967 border. Other Israeli officials argued that a withdrawal on that scale would cut into Israeli control of the roads and hilltops commanding roughly 18 of the West Bank's Jewish settlements.

In Israel, as his cabinet hardened, so did Netanyahu's denunciation of "dictates" from the United States. But Clinton administration officials pressed to be unimpressed.

"Bibi's trying to play a game of bravado," said one Clinton adviser, referring to Netanyahu by his Israeli nickname. "One of the criteria by which the public in Israel judges a prime minister is how they manage US-Israeli relations, and I'm not sure Bibi's ready to pay the price of an open rift."

With both men increasingly committed to the fight, it grew harder by the weekend to see how either could finesse their dispute.

One well-known American Jewish leader, insisting on anonymity, asked: "Will Netanyahu bow to Clinton's iron will, in which case the United States is going to be in a completely different role in the Middle East? Or will Netanyahu stand up to the president of the United States, impairing his relations with his principal ally but demonstrating to the world that the government of Israel is a sovereign state and makes its own decisions?"

"That's what we're going to find out, and we're going to pay a very high price for this little research."



deadlocks.

Ross and Indyk, among others, wound up playing major roles in reaching the January 1997 accord in which Netanyahu agreed to vacate most of the West Bank city of Hebron. Anticipating that Netanyahu would then "back to the right" to protect his coalition, Clinton and Albright pleaded with him not to begin building a controversial Jewish neighborhood in a sector of East Jerusalem annexed from the West Bank.

Two months later, Netanyahu broke ground at the site, called Har Homa in Hebrew and Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arabic, and Israeli-Palestinian talks broke down for good.

Almost continuously since, Ross and his team have tried to broker a way out of the impasse to the final chapter of peace talks that were supposed to have started the same month Netanyahu stepped to power.

In January, conscious of the implications of committing the prestige of his office, Clinton invited Netanyahu and Arafat for intensive discussions of US "ideas" to break their deadlock. The administration still sought to avoid the appearance of having drafted a US peace plan,

as land confiscations and home demolitions.

Clinton hoped, one official said, that "if the parties would not respond to each other, they would respond to us." When that did not happen, the administration began planning to raise the stakes.

"The Americans decided a long time ago that this is what they were going to do," said a foreign diplomat who has consulted with the Clinton peace team.

"What may look like improvisation is based on very refined thinking."

Arafat, who did not much like the US plan at first, became more amenable as the depth of Netanyahu's resistance became clear. The Clinton administration recruited Egyptian, Jordanian and European help to persuade Arafat to sign on, intending to step up pressure on Netanyahu by casting him as the lone holdout against his country's principal ally.

Struggling to reduce the US 13 percent demand, Netanyahu wrote to Clinton on March 10 with an offer to give up far less land—about 9 percent—but to choose places that would in-

## LURIE'S WORLD



## Middle East Beat

by Khairi Janbek

### What happens next?

DURING THE years of one's academic education, there was a television game show in which a sporting incident was stopped in frame, and the contestants were asked to predict what would follow.

When we look at our region, that program is especially recalled in comparison to attempts to play the guessing game of peace, which seems unrelated to either sportsmanship or its spirit.

And since one is already taking the path of parables, mightn't one drift into the Abbasid Court of Al Rashid, where Khazroun, the mother, and Zubaidah, the wife, vied with each other for political influence, and notice a similarity to the statement of Hillary Clinton to the effect of supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state?

Of course, there was an official US response that Mrs Clinton was reflecting her personal opinion. Nevertheless, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu preferred to dwell on the Abbasid precedent, and expressed his protestations regarding the statement.

Perhaps the American preoccupation with Middle East affairs—good in itself—is uncharacteristically bringing out underlying tendencies. But at the same time, it is drawing characteristic responses from Netanyahu, who seems to believe that despite the fact that he is in the Middle East, he does not necessarily have to be of it.

It is important to place such events in the context of recent meetings in European and American capitals, especially in light of the fact that Arab capitals are not even on the game-board, with the exception of Cairo and Amman.

The position of Jordan in the current situation is governed by the important factors of its own interests as a state, its commitment to the peace process as well as peace-building, and its unequivocal support of the PNA. But those important factors cannot be taken in the abstract, and should not be dealt with in a disconnected manner.

Obviously, Jordan's interests are toward the conclusion of a comprehensive peace treaty with all Arab parties, in addition to the fulfillment of legitimate Palestinian rights. Therefore, it is essential to understand that the Jordanian role is not specifically tailored to perform mediatory functions between our Palestinian brethren and Israel, though it is an important task that His Majesty King Hussein has performed in the interests of the even larger Arab cause, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has often carried out in tireless shuttle diplomacy.

The fact remains that Jordan is organically linked to the Palestinian people and their cause. It is committed to the wholehearted support of the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. It is also a signatory of a peace treaty with Israel, and has developed its relations on that basis. Clearly, with both Israel and the PNA, Jordan has developing business, trade, and investment interests.

But there are also political issues, legitimate in nature, which compel Jordan to be part of any future settlement between our brethren in the PNA and Israel. Hence, one can conclude that Jordan is an important and integral part of a triumvirate that can only reach a proper solution to the Palestinian problem in this relationship, and that Jordan's role is active, and proactive—continuous, in other words, and not built on an *ad hoc* basis.

There are many issues that require direct cooperation between the three parties which are impossible to resolve in a bilateral manner. They are very complex and may require expert opinion. Yet the fact remains that the question of Holy Jerusalem, and the issue of overlapping sovereignty and self-determination, cannot be ignored in any final settlement.



## Business scene

■ Head of the Financial Market Authority, Michael Marto, suggests that total non-Jordanian investment in the Amman Financial Market since the beginning of this year is estimated at JD 20.2 million compared to JD 5.3 million for the same time last year. He added that during April the market witnessed a high rate of investments from Arab and foreign countries.

■ The Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Co generated profits of JD 13,443,695 in 1997 compared with JD 10,179,347, a rise of 32% rise. Its overall sales rose from JD 24,643,147 in 1996 to JD 30,407,175 last year. Pretax profits were up from JD 3,803,775 in 1996 to JD 7,043,478 in 1997, a rise of 85%.

■ The specialized Investment Complexes Co generated profits of JD 60,000 in 1997, and latest figures estimate its sales to hit about JD 1 million. The company has completed the first phase of the Industrial Complexes city, including buildings, infrastructure and other relevant services. Already 228 industrial units have been constructed in addition to trade stores, garages and craft centers.

■ Total sales of Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Co reached JD 39,982,284 last year of which the share of the state's coffers was JD 26,863,218. The company increased its capital to JD 12 million by distributing free bonus shares among shareholders.

■ Al Sharq for Investment Projects (Holding) Co has increased its capital from JD 9 million to JD 11 million. Although investment activity was brisk in 1997, the company made a net profit of JD 57.4 thousand.

■ Similarly, the Paper and Carton Factories is increasing its capital from JD 3 million to JD 5 million. A million new shares at one dinar each are being put up for subscription. The company has produced 6,124 tons of carton and paper last year.

## Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 13 MAY

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7089	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SPY	0.4801	0.4825
YEN	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEM	0.3667	0.3685
LYT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

## Local tourism industry needs outside promotion

By Ihsan Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

**REVAMPING TOURISM.** Both on the internal and external levels, has recently become the talk of the town.

Critics say more needs to be done to make Jordan a more attractive place for tourists, something which they add is sadly lacking. Tour operators point out that both ordinary Jordanians and incoming tourists are simply not satisfied with the service at touristic sites, nor by the exorbitant prices.

However, officials stress that the situation is improving and expect more visitors to flock to the country.

Disappointingly, recent statistics from the Ministry of Tourism indicate that the total number of tourists arriving in the Kingdom last year declined by 3.03 percent. The number reached 3,067,892 visitors, compared with 3,163,592 in 1996. This figure includes tourists from the Americas, Europe, the Gulf, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Africa.

Al-Khatib, a local economist, says that one of the reasons for the reduction has to do with the high costs of hotel stays.

"For instance, if we take Aqaba, which has about 27 hotels containing a total of 3,400 beds, the average per night stay costs somewhere between JD 60 to JD 70 per person (about \$100). This, of course, does not include charges for transport, food, etc." By comparison, a three night stay in Cyprus runs about

JD 200—for everything.

One tourist who had recently returned from the Dead Sea came away complaining about the bad service, and the expensive food and drinks.

"Is it fair that a bottle (not can), of Pepsi is sold at JD 1.5," he asks incredulously.

Another owner of a tour agency who preferred to remain anonymous, says, "We should not blame the vendor or the man who is in charge of a restaurant in that part of the Kingdom, he may have an excuse for selling at a high price."

The vendor, he explains, has to bear the expense of carrying every food item he sells all the way from Amman or from a distant supermarket. So he has to offset his costs by selling at a higher price.

Another tour agent, who also preferred to remain anonymous, points to another aspect. "Our problem in Jordan has partly to do with the low income of many of our people. Because of this, they look for the cheapest form of leisure, which is often going on a picnic."

"To avoid the high cost of joining organized touristic tours, people prefer to spend their time in the open air."

"Just go and watch the many families who picnic by the sides of the Airport Road," he adds. Of course they are free to



spend their time wherever and however they like. Nevertheless, these sites are often left in a less-than-perfect condition after the picnic is over. Leftover food and garbage often litter the areas, and their effect is not only unsightly, it is also harmful to the environment."

Thus, "it's better stop asking officials or those who are involved with promoting tourism to upgrade services and facilities at the touristic sites." Instead, there should be greater "touristic awareness" and ethics should be stressed," retorts another angry touristic agent.

One visitor says that there is definitely a lack of the finance necessary to upgrade touristic facilities and promote Jordan outside. "Israel spends about \$50 million every year to promote tourism, and Egypt contributes upwards of \$40-\$45 million to its touristic sites. By

contrast, there has so far been about \$5 million available per year to promote touristic and recreational activities in Jordan."

Such promotional activity—involving advertising of touristic sites, hotels and resorts through brochures, conferences, public relations campaigns and exhibitions—have to be organized in such a way that their presentation outside of Jordan makes outsiders want to come in.

## Daimler seeks US support for merger

By Richard Waters in New York and Haig Simoniun in Detroit

**DAIMLER-BENZ** plans to create a new US-style board of directors after its merger with Chrysler, according to Jürgen Schrempf, chairman of the German company.

The board would bring together top executives from the new DaimlerChrysler and representatives of its shareholders, and would be in addition to the traditional management and supervisory boards maintained by German companies, he added.

It also emerged yesterday that Thomas Stalkamp, Chrysler's president, would take the central role in managing the integration of the two companies despite the fact that Daimler executives will be in a majority on the key decision-making groups in the new DaimlerChrysler.

Both developments appeared to point to efforts by Daimler to win strong US backing. Although billed as a merger of equals, the all-stock deal announced on Thursday amounts to an acquisition of Chrysler for \$38 billion.

Commenting on the new board, Schrempf said: "I think

Americans will feel very comfortable with this." The intention was to create a formal arrangement for some of the new company's biggest shareholders to meet executives, he added.

It was unclear, however, what power the new group would have to influence strategy, or how it would sit along-



side the supervisory board made up of trades union and shareholders representatives.

Stalkamp, who became Chrysler president earlier this year, is one of three US executives on a seven-person committee set up to manage the merger. He will be responsible for the integration of the two companies, as well as all of Chrysler's car and truck busi-

nesses. Daimler said putting him firmly in position to step into the shoes of Bob Eaton, the Chrysler chairman who is due to retire in three years.

Eaton and Gary Valade, Chrysler's chief financial officer, will also sit on the new chairman's integration council, with Valade being given control of global purchasing.

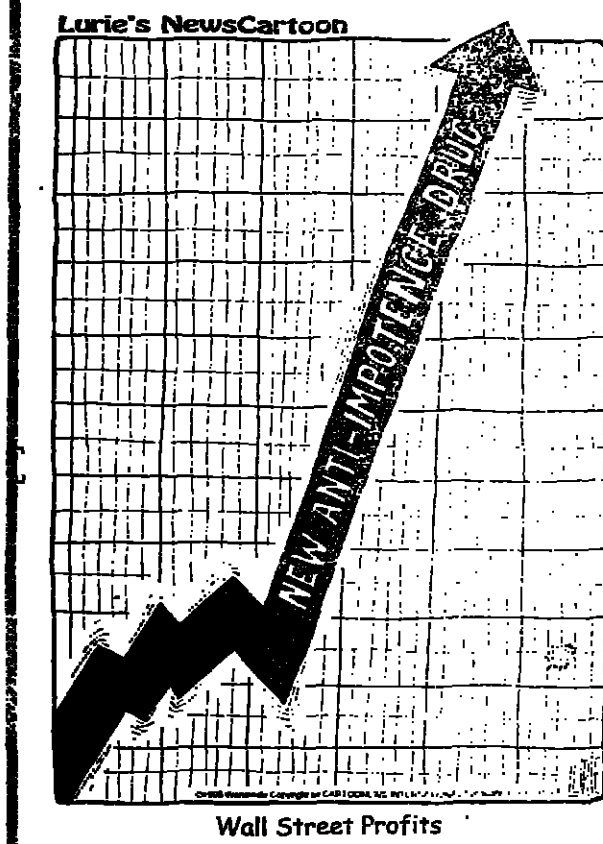
Daimler executives, led by Schrempf, will be in charge of finance and strategy.

Also, maintaining a clear division between the two car brands, Jürgen Hubbert will sit on the committee as head of the Mercedes car business. Daimler executives will also take ten of the 18 seats on the new company's management board.

It also appeared likely that Kirk Kerkorian, Chrysler's biggest shareholder, and the US auto workers' union would win seats on DaimlerChrysler's supervisory board.

Eaton said: "We haven't made the final decisions." However, asked if Kerkorian would be allowed to name a representative to the board, he added: "I suspect he will."

Financial Times Syndication

First on Syrian border, fourth in Kingdom  
Duty Free shop opens at Jaber

**ANOTHER DUTY** Free Shop was officially opened at the Jaber crossing point on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's 45th anniversary of his assumption of his constitutional powers. It was officially opened by Prime Minister Dr Abdul Salam Al Majali. The opening marked the establishment of the first Jordanian Duty Free Shop (JDFS) on Jordan's territorial border with Syria.

However, this is the fourth center to be opened in the Kingdom, the first being at the King Hussein Bridge, followed by others at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, and a shop in the Airport's terminal at the 7th Circle. JDFS chief Nader Al Thabai says he is very pleased with the establishment of new center at the Jaber point, and expects a lot of activity.

To make it easier to shop, JDFS set up two shops, one on the departure side, and another for those entering

from Syria.

Goods on display include bags, handbags, pens, lighters, toys, cigarettes and chocolates. These are just a few of the many items available in the duty free shops, all at competitive prices.

JDFS is busy preparing for the opening of other duty free shops, with one one at Karame on the border with Iraq that even includes a pharmacy. The new shops are being set up to provide for both the fashionable desires and practical needs of a wide variety of people.



## Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
* Flota Waving Jordan Investment Bank National Industry 6.45 5.23 4.55	* Middle East Bank * Rafia Plastic Industry * Universal Sight & Sound 4.49 3.66 3.33	* Middle East Bank * Jordan Cereals * Byones 5.38 5.11 4.82	* Arab Sea Insurance * Al-Jar Investment * The Housing Bank 5.00 5.00 4.77
* Flota Waving Al-Jar Investment Arab Sea Insurance 6.45 5.23 5.00	* Jordan Investment Bank * Wadon Industry * National Engineering 4.97 4.86 4.35	* Arab Sea Insurance * Jordan Trading * Fidy Insurance 5.26 5.09 5.00	* Nizak Industry * ROCO * Nizak Industry 5.88 5.36 5.88
General Price Pointer	171.380	172.620	174.870
Trade Volume	1624157	879992	1724217
Stock Volume	1119634	654485	1223652
Highest Traded Stocks			
* Arab Bank	527368	* Arab Bank	257315
		* Arab Bank	523995
		* The Housing Bank	354072

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

# The Cairo real estate market: is it unreal?

By Samir Rifaat  
Cairo Star correspondent

"THE MARKET has come a long way since the day I closed my first deal with a Peruvian diplomat 25 years ago," says Mona Foda, senior partner of one of Cairo's oldest real-estate agencies. "In those days my boss and I operated through a tom-tom and messenger system because telephones were down most of the time." This was also the time when Foda recovered from a failed marriage in Canada.

When she traveled to Switzerland in her late teens Foda wasn't sure if she was ever returning to Egypt let alone one day take over Cairo's first women-only real estate agency. A pre-1952 senator's daughter married to the post graduate grandson of interwar prime minister Ismail Sidki Pasha, Foda envisaged a new life away from a country which had gone socialist and where her peers didn't know where their next monthly earnings would come from.

These were Egypt's scary '60s. Following the birth of their first child, Foda and husband moved again, this time to Canada where she made a short-lived attempt at professional life. It wasn't easy since all she had going for her was the equivalent of a high school certificate.

And with the birth of a second son, there was no question of getting a regular job. The marriage meanwhile was going up in smoke so that it was as a single mother that she made the downhearted return journey home. But the Egypt Foda found was different from the one she had left.

A change in regime and the jubilant aftermath of the 1973 October War had brightened things up. Moreover, the economic boom-bust cycle was taking a turn for the better. Cautious optimism prevailed everywhere. After a short stint in a fashionable boutique, Foda learned that Mrs. Soud Rashed-Khalil, a former beauty queen of exceptional talent, was looking at expanding her real-estate agency. Established circa 1961, this was the first woman-run agency in the history of Cairo's real-estate market, a trend that would be followed years later as more and more ladies of leisure joined the trade.

As business expanded, Rashed-Khalil sought assistance from like-minded persons who were multilingual and had reliable social connections. Two candidates had already responded. Mona Badrawi, daughter of Egypt's largest former landowner, and Nadia Gamal al-Din, a daughter of Paris-based Syrian tycoon Akram Ojeh.

Mona Foda would be the third. A quick learner, Foda joined the firm in the mid-70s just as business was taking off. Lebanon had gone to war with itself and refugees were streaming into Cairo. The new arrivals coincided with the vertical magnification of the relative new district of Mohandessine.

Unlike most other clients, the "keefik chert" crowd were a cash-ready clientele looking for a place to lay anchor. Deals in those days were a snap. Heretofore, the agency had dealt primarily with exacting foreign diplomats most of them interested in the upmarket districts of Garden City, Zamalek or Maadi. All three had a western flavor about them. Garden City with its grand mansions and large apartments, Maadi with its garden villas and foreign schools, Zamalek where almost every smart building had a view of the Nile or fronted the famous Gezira Club.

The late '60s and early '70s were known in the trade as the tight years. These were the pre building-boom days when demand for real estate far exceeded supply. Fortunately for Rashed-Khalil and her jaunty team, they knew most of the villa and luxury apartment owners who, at the time, represented a cross-section of Egypt's ancient regime.

For economic reasons, many among them were obliged to rent out their premises while they themselves rented much smaller apartments. In this respect, Rashed-Khalil's agency had an edge on its competitors who relied on the trade's single most important source of information: the boob (concealment).

Save for Rashed-Khalil and one or two professional real estate offices including Khourys of Zamalek, the 1960s were characterized by mum and pop type set-ups. No surprise then that Maadi's earliest agents worked out of makeshift kiosks, coffee shops and bicycles. It was Sadat's infitah (open door policy) which

jump-started the 1970s building boom which supplanted a decade and a half of private sector construction freeze.

Overnight apartment houses went up as more and more people capitalized on the avalanche of foreign arrivals, mainly bankers, corporate and oil executives, and platoons of white collar experts. The rental market flourished. Moreover, there was an emerging class of Gulf money itching to get in on the building boom. With time, real-estate supply far outdistanced demand. The building map of Cairo was changing irrevocably.

While the 1960s and early '70s were characterized by a western clientele in search of villas and grand "style" apartments, the '80s saw a rush for everything modern, from aluminum French windows and en-suite bedrooms to air-conditioned kitchens...all the neoteric trimmings.

On the other hand, the mid-'90s saw a return to old refurbished apartments preferably with high ceilings, parquet and chimneys. In fact, to this day, Zamalek's Union, Lebon and Ali Labib Gahr buildings remain top of the line. In the same league but with four decades separating them are the modern al-Abd and al-Gamal buildings.

The 30 story-plus al-Abd building overlooks Zamalek's Gezira Club, comes with a garage and fire escape, has security service and offers five and four bedroom configurations. Equally important, al-Abd has a service elevator and a standby generator. Prices for renting a 300-350 square meter apartment in al-Abd are in the \$4,000-\$4,500 per month range.

Purchase price in the same building is somewhere between \$2,350 - \$2,900 per square meter. Prices are about 40 to 50 percent less for similar facilities in Garden City and Maadi. As more four and five bedroom configurations come on stream—even if the rooms are smaller and matchbox-shaped—what remains scarce are the one-bedroom units.

Foda claims there is a growing demand for European and New York type studios especially from single expats or those who prefer to leave their families behind. Another phenomena is the declining amount of balconies and terraces. On the one hand, apartment owners like to incorporate their balconies into the flat (for



A view from Cairo

dust and noise considerations), while on the other hand, foreign renters specifically request open balconies in order to take in Egypt's sunny round-the-year climate.

Today, business is conducted by fax, cellular and car phone. Even internet and electronic mail is coming into play says Foda who has had intermittent recourse on her two sons, Ali Marei, a married Coca Cola executive in West Africa and Hussein who did his own stint in real estate before getting into environmentally friendly transportation—the economical and silent Vespa. Although the GMZ (Garden City, Maadi, Zamalek) districts still represents a major portion of real-estate business, agencies are looking more and more at the Pyramids area, well beyond Giza's sought after Nile side.

With the growth of industrial parks and satellite towns like 6th of October City (north of Cairo), renters want to live close to their place of employment. Moreover, the opening of new foreign schools on Cairo's periphery has taken away from Maadi's educational exclusivity. As Cairo expands into the outlying desert, Foda and others in her profession realize it is impossible for any one agency to cover both the metropolitan area and the new gated settlements (derided by some as "deluxe ghettos") on Cairo's periphery which is why more and more intra-agency deals are now made on a split commission basis.

With regards to the first years of the next millennium, Foda expects a surge in demand for Cairo's outer regions. Her agency has already been approached by Katameya Heights luxury home owners

who are putting their villas on the market (sale price of a villa starts at LE 1 million) presumably for those with a penchant for golf. "It could be that with the unprecedented availability of new suburban developments we will see a drop in prices in the GMZ area," According to Foda, certain things in her line of business haven't changed. "For starters, in the absence of state-sanctioned guidelines, we still rely on the integrity and honesty of the persons we deal with. Secondly, the time factor. Lucky is the day you clinch a deal on your first outing. Conversely, you can visit 30 potentials and no dice. There is also the customer who wants it all: Nile and pyramids view, five bedrooms, central air-condition, Jacuzzi, the whole works, but has no corresponding hard cash!"

There are also the risks of the trade such as the lessor who reneges on the deal or one who refuses to pay the standard commission (one month's rental or 2.5 percent of sale). There is the recurring renter who holds the real-estate agent responsible whenever anything goes wrong in the rented unit.

And there is the breakdown of a deal even as the contract is about to be signed either because of poor communication between lessor and lessee or because of interference of an overzealous lawyer who wants a piece of the action. Also according to Foda, the state of the real estate market is giving rise to growing concern. Will the expansion of activity and the astronomical rise in price levels which have characterized the last 15 years continue?

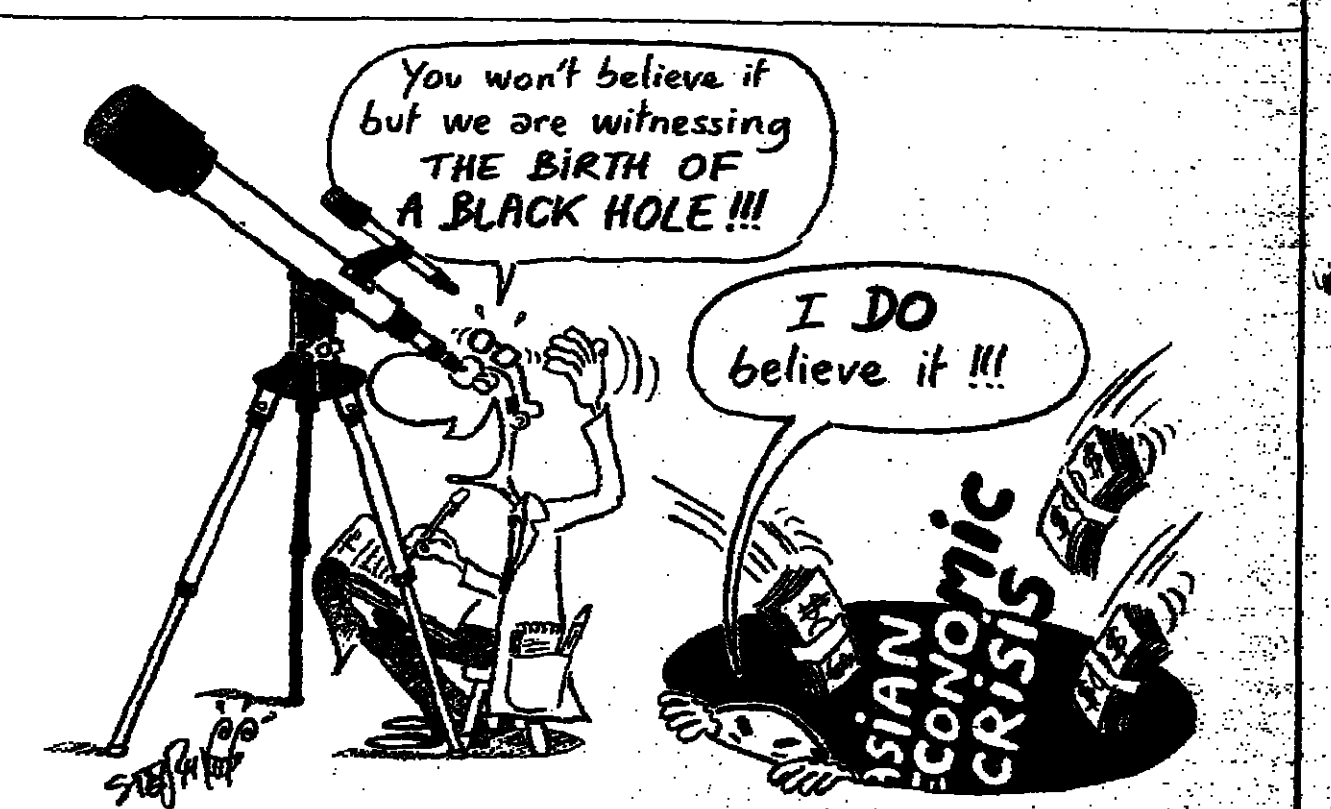
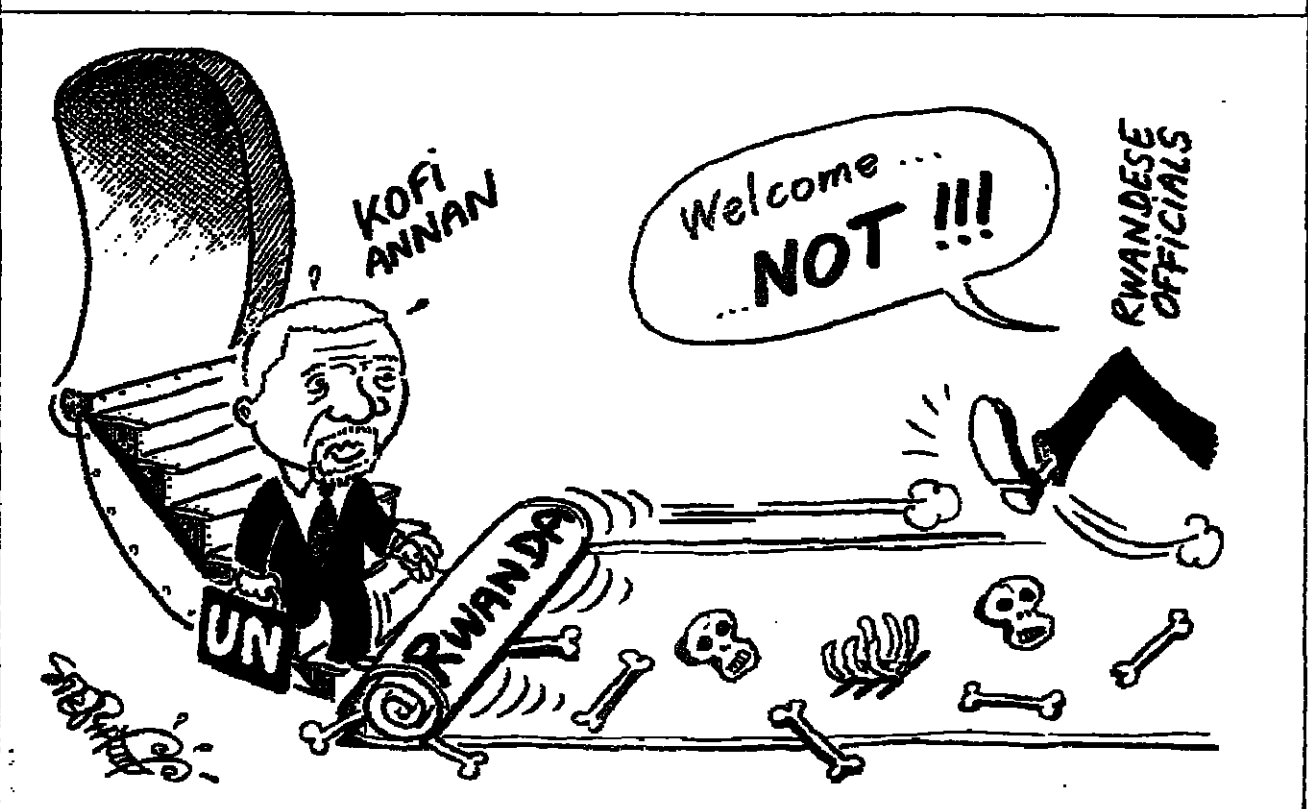
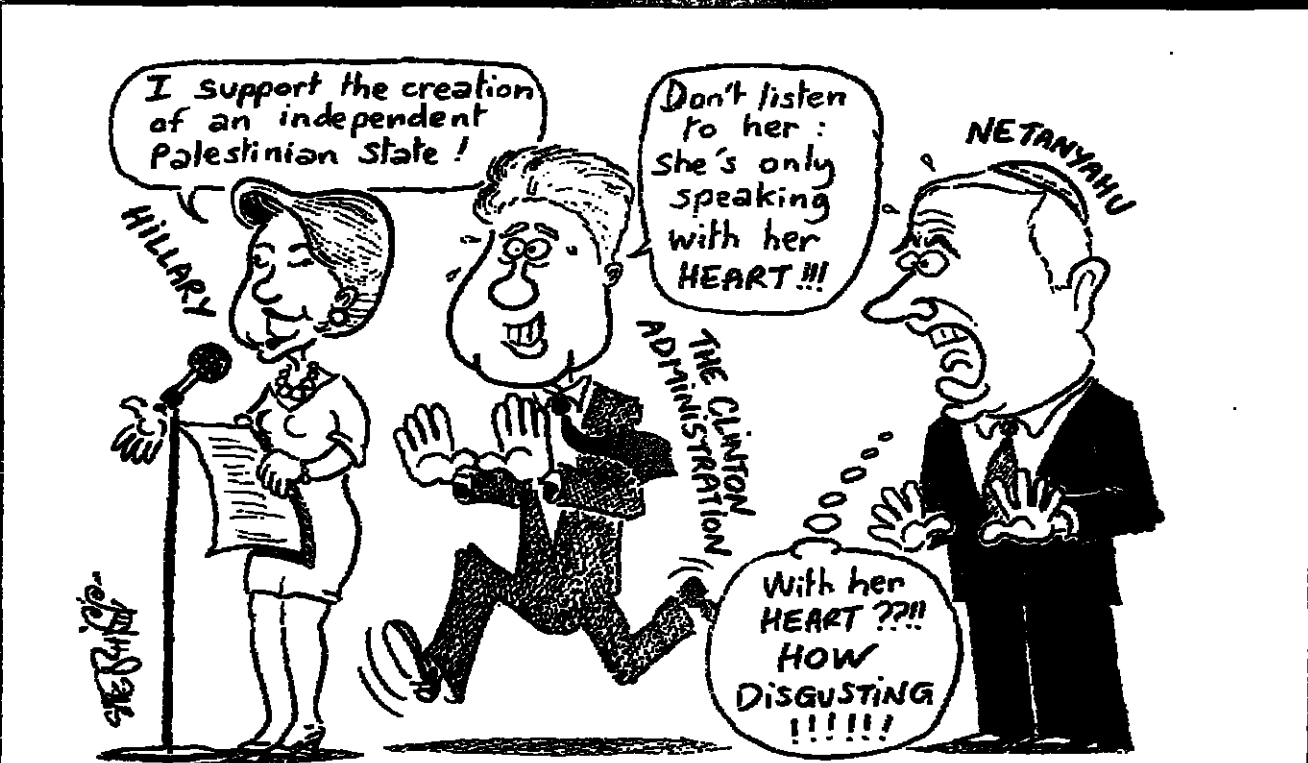
And to what extent is the market influenced by internal factors, such as government-land sales and the pace of construction? There are no easy answers. One particular feature which distinguishes the real estate market from "normal" markets—such as those for tomatoes, televisions—where the lower the price, the greater the demand, is that when real estate prices rise, more people are led to buy more apartments and other properties.

Conversely, falling prices are always accompanied by lower demand and lower activity. Whatever the reason for this phenomenon, it means that everyone in the business of building and selling homes, offices and factories has a vested interest in prices going up. Agents, who live off the volume of deals rather than the absolute price level, are obliged to favor rising prices, since falling prices go together with a shriveling volume of transactions.

From her personal experience Foda will tell you that real-estate, like all markets for assets, is a cyclical business tied in to the state of the overall economy. No boom ever goes on forever, nor is a state of stable equilibrium ever reached. There are always ups and downs, with only their intensity and volatility varying from one cycle to another. Moreover, to this day, there has been no expert assessment on the state of the local market so that many analysts consider the going residential prices unreal. A situation which in turn leads everyone to ask whether we are in fact dealing in an "unreal" estate market rather than the "real" one.

## World events according to Peray

Stephane Peray is an editorial cartoonist living in Bangkok. He contributed these cartoons to The Star



Stephane Peray



# Countries condemn Indian H-bomb test

By Dexter Filkins

NEW DELHI, India—The Indian government exploded a hydrogen bomb Monday, shunning international pressure and threatening to drag the region into a dangerous and prolonged confrontation. Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced in an evening news conference here that his country's scientists had conducted three underground atomic tests—the country's first since 1974—in a desert laboratory 300 miles southwest of the capital. One of those tests, Vajpayee said, detonated a thermonuclear device, the country's first.

Vajpayee, India's prime minister for less than three months, said he had ordered the tests to safeguard India's security. But the move brought swift condemnation from around the world—and angry, ominous threats from India's main rival, Pakistan, which has fought three wars with India since 1947, hinted strongly that it would soon test its own nuclear bomb—and match India step for step.

China, which maintains a substantial nuclear arsenal, has conducted tests of its own in recent months, stayed silent after the nuclear tests Monday but is coming off a week of some of its worst relations with India in more than a decade. The White House also condemned India's nuclear tests, which are all but certain to trigger a range of sanctions, including a suspension of millions of dollars in direct US aid and a possible end to billions of dollars in new loans from international agencies.

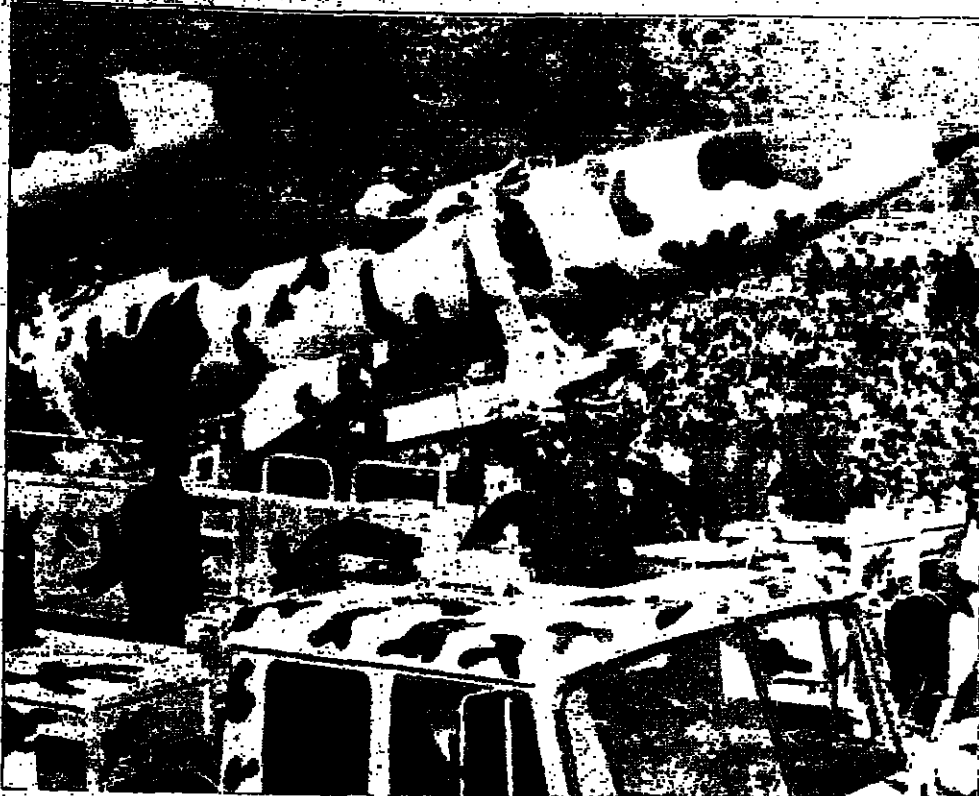
Monday's nuclear tests seemed likely to give rise to a period of uncertainty in a region that many analysts regard now as the most likely to witness a possible nuclear exchange.

Neither India nor Pakistan has signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—landmark efforts to arms control that individually have been endorsed by more than 100 countries.

While only five countries—the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China—have openly declared their nuclear capabilities, several, including India and Pakistan, are thought to possess the requisite technology to build nuclear bombs.

India is believed to have had the capability to assemble several nuclear weapons since the mid-1970s. Pakistan, though it has never tested a nuclear device, is generally believed to be able to quickly build at least a half-dozen nuclear weapons.

Besides three wars, India and Pakistan almost came to blows again in 1990—and, according to US intelligence sources—nearly deployed nuclear weapons against one another. India and China, which maintains a substantial



nuclear arsenal, fought a still unresolved border war in 1962.

Indian officials said Monday they had considered the likely international response, and decided these tests were worth the boost to national security and national morale. "The people of India now have a very credible nuclear deterrent," said Brijesh Mishra, principal secretary to the prime minister. "India faces a major security threat, and we have taken care of the very dangerous nuclear environment around India."

Mishra said he hoped the United States, which, until Monday, was the nation that had conducted the world's most recent nuclear test, a "sub-critical" underground detonation last year in Nevada, would not impose sanctions on India.

While Monday's Indian tests were widely condemned, the United States, Britain, France, and China, which have openly declared their nuclear capabilities, several, including India and Pakistan, are thought to possess the requisite technology to build nuclear bombs.

India is believed to have had the capability to assemble several nuclear weapons since the mid-1970s. Pakistan, though it has never tested a nuclear device, is generally believed to be able to quickly build at least a half-dozen nuclear weapons.

Besides three wars, India and Pakistan almost came to blows again in 1990—and, according to US intelligence sources—nearly deployed nuclear weapons against one another. India and China, which maintains a substantial

nuclear arsenal, fought a still unresolved border war in 1962.

Indian officials said Monday they had considered the likely international response, and decided these tests were worth the boost to national security and national morale. "The people of India now have a very credible nuclear deterrent," said Brijesh Mishra, principal secretary to the prime minister. "India faces a major security threat, and we have taken care of the very dangerous nuclear environment around India."

Mishra said he hoped the United States, which, until Monday, was the nation that had conducted the world's most recent nuclear test, a "sub-critical" underground detonation last year in Nevada, would not impose sanctions on India.

While Monday's Indian tests were widely condemned, the United States, Britain, France, and China, which have openly declared their nuclear capabilities, several, including India and Pakistan, are thought to possess the requisite technology to build nuclear bombs.

India is believed to have had the capability to assemble several nuclear weapons since the mid-1970s. Pakistan, though it has never tested a nuclear device, is generally believed to be able to quickly build at least a half-dozen nuclear weapons.

Besides three wars, India and Pakistan almost came to blows again in 1990—and, according to US intelligence sources—nearly deployed nuclear weapons against one another. India and China, which maintains a substantial

nuclear arsenal, fought a still unresolved border war in 1962.

Indian officials said Monday they had considered the likely international response, and decided these tests were worth the boost to national security and national morale. "The people of India now have a very credible nuclear deterrent," said Brijesh Mishra, principal secretary to the prime minister. "India faces a major security threat, and we have taken care of the very dangerous nuclear environment around India."

fission and fusion to produce a much more powerful explosion than a standard atomic device.

The Indian government said the explosions did not release any radiation into the atmosphere. John Minsch of US National Earthquake Center said the strongest explosion registered a magnitude of 5.4.

The United States is deeply disappointed by the decision of the government of India to conduct three nuclear tests, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

The explosions seemed to set up a confrontation between the United States and India, which have never been the best of allies, to begin with. Under the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act of 1994, the United States must cut off all economic aid, military aid, credits, bank loans and export licenses to any country—other than the five acknowledged nuclear powers—that tests a nuclear weapon.

The law also says the United States will oppose World Bank loans and all other international lending to the offending nation. While the United States by itself could not block World Bank loans to India, other countries like Japan, which denounced Monday's Indian tests, and Germany generally support US efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Monday that US government officials were still examining the test data and had reached no conclusions.

But any international sanctions could be catastrophic for India, one of the poorest nations on Earth.

Meanwhile, the nuclear tests seemed certain to heighten tensions between India and its neighbors. Pakistani Foreign

Minister Gohar Ayub criticized India for its nuclear tests and suggested that stern countermeasures were on the way. Only last week, the chief of the Pakistani nuclear program vowed that Pakistan would respond to an Indian nuclear test in "a matter of weeks."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Actor poised to play president

By Rone Tempest

MANILA, Philippines—A political widow who led a popular revolution, a West Point-educated general who became a civilian politician. And now, if early exit polls prove true, a movie actor stands poised to become the third elected Philippine president since the fall of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

Final results in Monday's national elections are not expected for at least 10 days. But exit polls conducted by broadcast media here showed former actor Joseph Estrada, 61, holding a commanding lead.

An exit poll conducted by the private DZRH radio station showed Estrada leading his nine rivals for the post with 34.6 percent of those interviewed. His nearest rival, House Speaker Jose De Venecia, also 61, trailed with 16.8 percent.

Other polls, notably one conducted by the generally pro-De Venecia Facts Base Inc., showed the race closer but with Estrada still in the lead. Most of the early exit polls were conducted in urban areas where Estrada's support is weakest.

As he voted in Manila Monday morning, Estrada exuded confidence. "I feel great," he said. "It's all over, bar the counting." Later, as he feasted on suckling pig with supporters at his Manila home, he called his election campaign "the greatest performance of my life."

In his quest for the presidency of this former American colony, Estrada drew on parallels between his background and those of Presidents Reagan and Clinton. When opponents said his background as a movie actor was not serious, he cited Reagan's career.

Attacked by Philippine church leaders for his history of extramarital sexual dalliances, Estrada noted that Clinton faced similar problems.

If Estrada wins as expected, it could be a blow to the political influence of the Roman Catholic Church and its top prelate here, Jaime Cardinal Sin, who campaigned against him.

The moral power of the church is not



Estrada putting his vote in the ballot box

the same as it was in the past," said Gerry Barcan, a Manila lawyer and political columnist. "It still has some power but it is no longer shepherds leading sheep."

As usual in the Philippines' emotional political arena, the election was accompanied by widespread reports of violence. Officials said at least seven people died in election day-related incidents, including one episode in which supporters of a mayoral candidate in remote Jolo Island attacked opponents with mortars, injuring 11. Since the campaign began more than three months ago, more than 45 people have died.

Besides scattered violence, some vote counts were delayed because of power failures in rural areas.

If Estrada—the slitting Philippine vice president who is famous for his rags-to-riches film roles—is elected, this will be the second peaceful transition here. In a 1986 snap election, Marcos and Cory

Aquino, widow of assassinated opposition leader Benigno Aquino, declared victory. Aquino was installed as president after Marcos fled the country. In 1992, incumbent President Fidel Ramos won election for a single six-year term. Ramos supported House Speaker De Venecia in Monday's vote.

Imelda Marcos, widow of the late dictator, threw her support to Estrada after abandoning her own candidacy for president. But the Marcos political tradition will continue as a result of the Monday vote. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the late dictator, was elected governor of Ilocos Norte Province north of Manila. His sister, Imelda "Imee" Marcos-Manotoc, was elected to the house of representatives from the same province.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# American pilots recall tense airlift to Berlin

By William Drozdiak

BERLIN—Fifty years later, Herbert Monien still hears the low rumble of the American plane bearing precious sugar supplies as it dropped out of the clouds on a freezing November night. He still sees the flash of fire when the craft overshot the runway and crashed into a warehouse at Tempelhof Airport.

Monien, now 83, remembers the agonizing groans as he rushed to help the stricken crew. "They were screaming like crazy," he said. "I dragged out the pilot and plunged him into a nearby water tank. Then I went back and got the other two crewmen. They all had third-degree burns, but I got them to the hospital in time to save their lives."

At the time, Monien was in charge of monitoring the relief supplies that Western

allies were airlifting to 2 million residents of West Berlin, who were stranded when the Soviet army cut off ground access to their island of freedom in 1948. The blockade lasted 462 days and was one of the defining moments in the early days of the Cold War.

When President Clinton visits Tempelhof on Wednesday at the start of a European trip, he will pay tribute to the heroic actions of Monien and countless others who ensured the success of history's greatest humanitarian air rescue. It is an achievement that for many Berliners symbolized how the United States would stand by newly democratic allies who only three years earlier were regarded as mortal enemies.

The statistics alone attest to an amazing logistical feat. More than 2.3 million tons of food, fuel and medicine were

delivered to Tempelhof and two other makeshift airfields to sustain the Western enclave 110 miles inside the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany. US and British planes, with crews mobilized for round-the-clock service, flew 278,000 cargo missions. At the peak of the airlift, planes were taking off and landing every 30 seconds.

The crisis erupted in spring 1948 when the Soviet army began disrupting the flow of troops and supplies by the three Western allies—the United States, France and Britain—on their occupation sectors in West Berlin. When West Germany introduced its new currency, the mark, on June 24, the Russians closed off all ground routes to force the allies to abandon their territory and to starve the West Berliners into capitulation.

The US government, fearful of igniting war, balked at

dispatching armed convoys to reopen the routes. So the US military commander for Berlin, General Lucius Clay, decided the only option to a Communist takeover or the starvation of 2 million Berliners was to fly in food and other vital supplies.

"Clay called me and asked if we could start an airlift," recalled Captain Jack Bennett, who returned to Berlin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of what he calls his most fateful decision. "At first, I told him no way, because I thought it was too dangerous to do low-level flying at night over hostile territory. But I told him I didn't want to make history because I was young and wanted to stay alive."

Bennett went on to fly 60 missions—more than any other pilot—in what he and his fellow airmen called

Operation Vittles. Later, after East German authorities built a wall to divide Berlin and Pan American World Airways began making regular civilian flights to the city through special air corridors, Bennett became the airline's director in Berlin. But nothing matched the excitement of the airlift.

"Those were the most important flights of my life," Bennett said. "We saved many lives, and that is a heck of a lot better than flying tourists back and forth on their vacations to Mallorca."

Bennett's apprehensions were well founded. The airlift took place during one of Europe's coldest and wettest winters this century. The landings had to be conducted at such low altitudes that many planes were nearly skimming the rooftops. Seventy-eight airmen, including 31 Americans, lost their lives in crashes.

As Berlin embarks on a new phase of its eventful history as the capital of a reunited Germany, city officials have invited Bennett and nearly 1,000 other airlift veterans back for a rousing set of celebrations.

The purpose of the commemoration, according to Mayor Eberhard Diepgen, is not only to honor the valor of the pilots. It is also to remind a new generation of Germans about the unique partnership with the United States—one that risks losing its vigor now that a common strategic threat has vanished and both countries find themselves focusing on different challenges in the post-Cold War era. As a sign of the times, the last remaining non-civilian air route between Berlin and the United States was canceled two months ago.

Amid all the hoopla surrounding the anniversary, the spirit of the airlift remains highest in Herbert Monien's memory. For saving the lives of three American airmen a half century ago, Monien will be thanked by Clinton.

While pleased by the honor, Monien says nothing could surpass the elation he experienced when he received a thank-you note from General Clay three weeks after the rescue. "He included three cartons of Lucky Strike cigarettes," Monien said. "I felt like I'd been handed the biggest fortune I could ever imagine."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Jordan develops promising fitness market

By Anca de Maio  
Special to The Star

THE INTERCONTINENTAL Hotel recently held the first "Health and Fitness Seminar" in Amman. The meeting was meant to raise Jordanians' awareness of the scientifically proven benefits of physical exercise and healthy nutrition as they relate to weight management and delay of aging.

Organized by the leading Star Trac treadmill company and the Intercontinental Hotel, the seminar brought together information from three interrelated areas into a promotional global presentation.

On the one hand, last week's meeting informed the audience about the slimming, toning and detoxifying, algae-based treatments and hydrotherapy offered by the InterFit Health Spa of the Intercontinental Hotel. On the other, it gave the public some guidelines of "flexible," "sensible," "realistic" and "pleasant" nutrition knowledge, quoting scientific arguments that emphasize that diets alone do not work.

Introductory speeches by resident beauty therapist of the InterFit Health Spa, Emer Mellon, and by diet and nutrition consultant, Amal Nasser, were followed by the very convincing dissertation of the senior director of global marketing for Star Trac, Jim Teamm. Positive that the only valid solution to weight problems is regular physical activity and, of course, healthy eating habits, the experienced Californian speaker warmly encouraged the public to embrace exercise and commit themselves to a new and healthy way of life.

Attacking the "unscrupulous but smart marketers" of the weight loss drugs industry, the Star Trac fitness specialist de-

nounced the side-effects of the "magic tablet" that make you "look better than the curvy, sexy babes you see on TV." He recognized, on the contrary, that the fitness industry has done a very poor job in terms of marketing. "The weight loss industry in USA is a \$32 billion industry, yet the exercise market is only an \$8 billion business," he said. In other words, "80 million Americans diet, but only 20 million exercise."

Because efforts are being made to improve fitness club members, more people all over the world are getting involved in "workouts" and are finally getting results. "Jordan is still a premature market," estimated Gary Knill, Star Trac regional marketing manager for the Middle East, India, Africa and Russia, especially when compared to Israel, Saudi Arabia or South Africa.

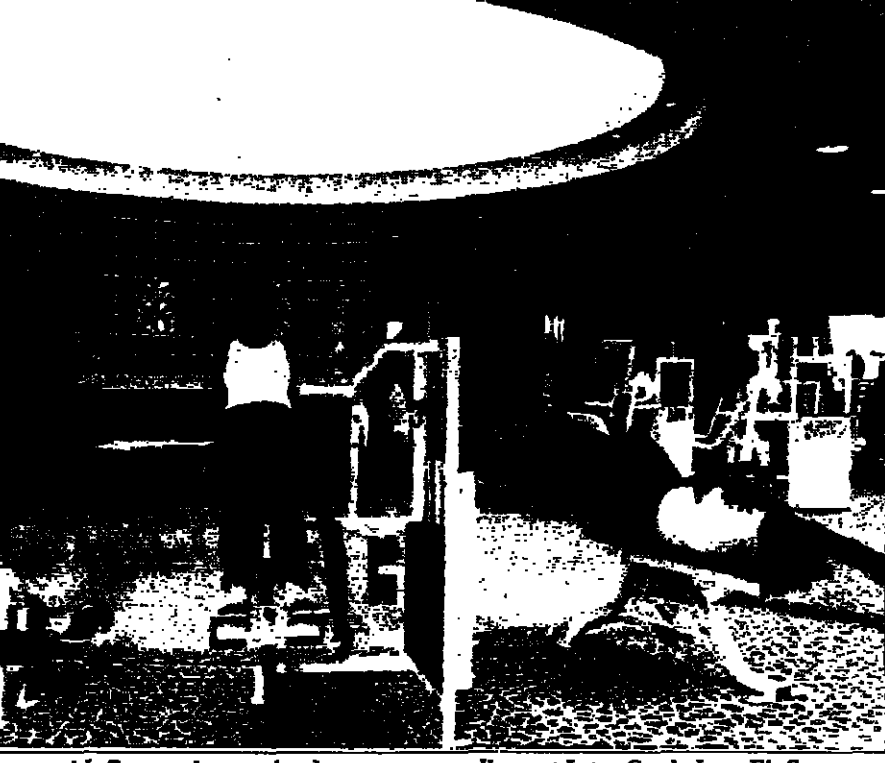
Nevertheless, our local distributor, Al-Jadval's manager, Mahmoud Atia, has been gaining a lot of credibility and is doing quite fine," he added. In the world's top three in cardiovascular equipment, the Star Trac company started its marketing project with Al-Jadval only two years ago. "This can be a 20 or 200-year project," Knill said, conscious that it takes time to change people's habits, but ready to organize a more specific seminar in three or four months' time.

"Twenty-five percent of Jordan's population suffer from diabetes," stated Ms Nasser. Although no other specific statistics about Jordan were mentioned, it seems that the rate of overweight persons in the country is increasing. "In most developed countries, adults spend 25 hours per week watching television," Teamm underlined, adding that obesity occurs more frequently in children, victims of TV and those who sit inactively in front of a computer screen.

Due to various factors, such as family culture, unhealthy eating habits, infrequent and low levels of physical activity, metabolic rate and heredity, obesity affects 1/3 of Americans and ... 54 per cent of Russia's population! The health risks implied, including heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, can be reduced even by modest weight loss.

As 95 per cent of those who complete a diet regain the weight they lost within one year, and as crash diets result in a slower metabolism and muscle tissue loss, the right weight-management answer was given in the mid 90s by two studies proving that muscle tissues consume calories even at rest.

"Between one hour and a half and two hours of exercise per week is all that is required," emphasized Teamm, promising that in eight weeks the results achieved through their weight loss exercise program consist of 8.5 pound (3.8 kilogram) loss in body fat and in 3 pound (1.3 kilogram) gain in limb mass. Given the fact that the loss of lean



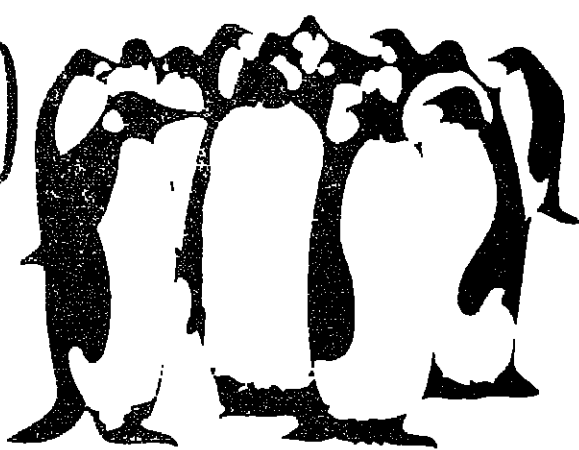
Slim down and tone up with fine equipment in elegant surroundings at Inter-Con's InterFit Spa

tissue intensifies after the mid 50s and, therefore, fewer calories are used, endurance exercises and vitamin supplements are effective for both weight management and delay of such aging-connected diseases as arthritis and osteoporosis.

"By the year 2010 the over-40 market will become huge and the aging process

will be a real issue," Teamm continued. "If you want to improve your image and lengthen your life, embrace exercise," the American speaker exclaimed. "This will be the best decision you ever made in your life and the beginning of a significant lifestyle change," he guaranteed.



ROUND  
OWN

## British Airways announces additional service between Beirut and London

BRITISH AIRWAYS on May 7, announced additional service to Beirut beginning June 20. This means an increase in flights from 7 to 8 per week.

The extra service which will be operated by British Airways franchise partner British Mediterranean, will depart from Heathrow Terminal 4 on Saturdays and return from Beirut on Sundays.

Beirut was the first destination for British Mediterranean when the airline began operations in October 1994. In March 1997, British Mediterranean became a franchise partner with British Airways and has since carried 55,000 passengers between London and Beirut.

British Airways Levant Manager Alan Briggs said, "We are delighted to have an eighth flight so

soon after the opening of Beirut's new terminal, which also marks the great success of the franchise."

The two Saturday services to Beirut from Heathrow will depart at 15:05 and 17:05. The two Sunday services back from Beirut depart at 08:30 and 10:45 arriving back into Heathrow at 11:35 and 13:50 respectively.

Chief Executive of British Mediterranean De Hetherington said "Our load factor on all our Levant routes—Beirut, Damascus and Amman—have increased beyond all expectations. Our Beirut route has been successful from the very beginning. Ever increasing trade between the UK and the Levant accounts for the large numbers of business travellers. The tourism trade has also expanded with the rapid redevelopment of the city's infrastructure."

Minding the past in the present

# Jerusalem regained

By Kofi Attah  
Special to The Star

How nations and people view their history is often problematic; how they display it, even more so.

The exhibition "Jerusalem for Us" currently on view at the Buran Gallery in Sweifieh presents a fascinating collection of 19th century photographs of Jerusalem, the heart of the Palestinians. The pictures were taken by the late Ali Mahmud, a renowned Palestinian from Jerusalem.

True to its title, the 30 black-and-white photographs, taken many years ago, display the frustration, doubt and uncertainty that have characterized much of the city during the last 50 years, since the establishment of Israel. The collection is not only informative—it ironically presents in glaring fashion a number of subliminal messages to the visitor.

Shots of buildings, streets and quarters of Jerusalem which are no longer there capture a moment from a time long past that has little to do with the current physical character of the city, yet which still have the capacity to evoke strong feeling for the old city as a place in the heart. Take for instance the contrast between a desert bedouin settings which has been replaced by modern settlements.

The onslaught of colonization, modernization and the development of various projects, roads and bridges has taken its toll on the Islamic core of the city.

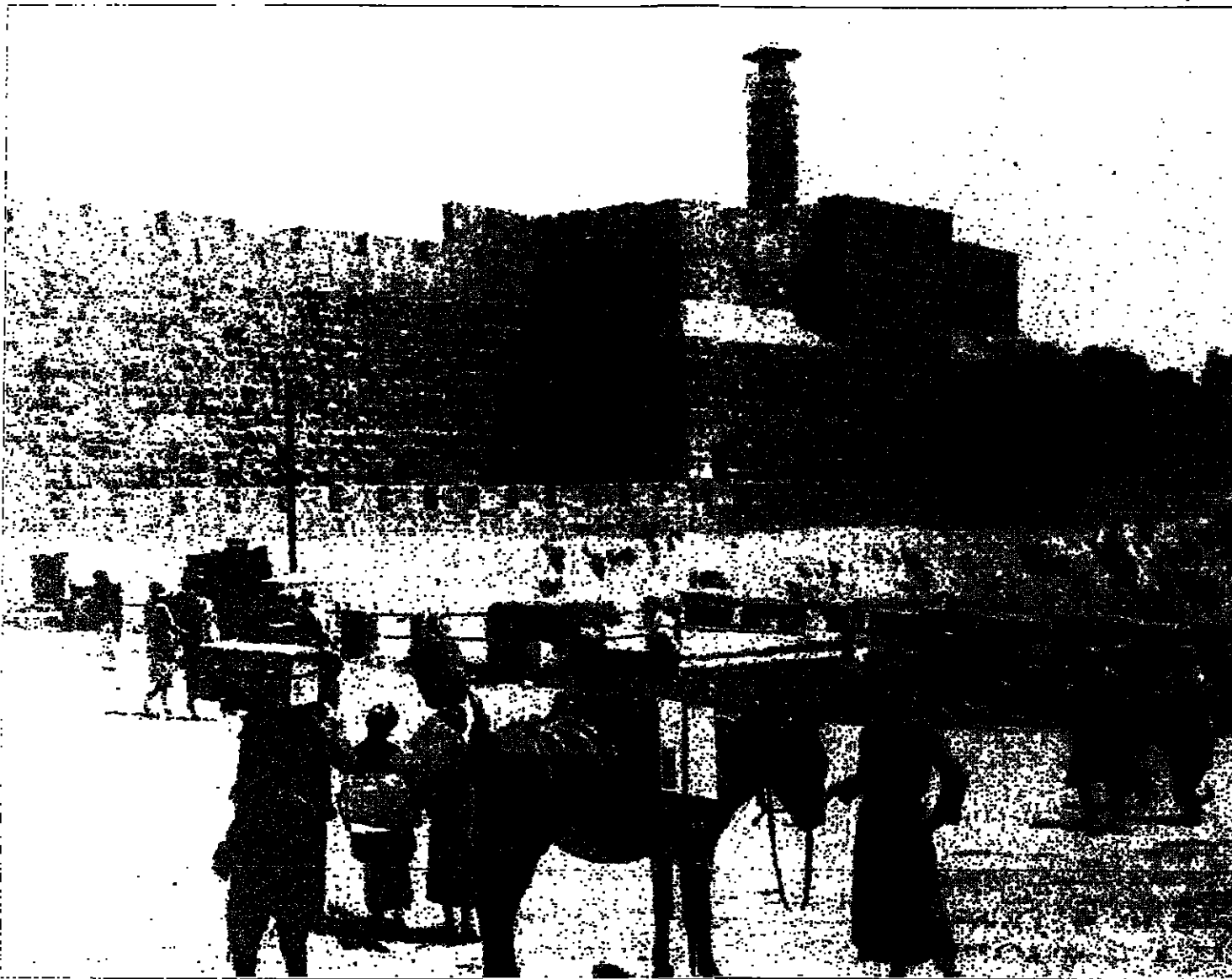
And there is a kinder, gentler piece of Jerusalem's past. The images of Al Aqsa mosque and other edifices taken with a polaroid still evoke the same image as when it was taken.

Upon entering the three-floor gallery, one realizes that one has entered an exhibition that is more than a just collection of photographs hung in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

Walking into the first floor, the sensation of this enticing selection begins to unfold into pictorial stories, narratives of real life. There is, for instance, a photograph depicting special market days with mules and donkeys carrying loads, while others portray the rich architecture of the old city.

The exhibition is a tribute to an eroded power, while at the same time, it acts as an inspiration to struggle for the restoration of a past glory. Insan Bandak, the gallery's director says, "The messages of the photographs are effective weapons to fight to maintain and keep Jerusalem forever."

Other particularly striking photographs included a Palestinian woman dressed in traditional attire, shot with celluloid sheet



film, and Islamic monuments that are in dire need of preservation. In addition to their sheer beauty, Ali Mahmud's photographs also suggest that the cultural inheritance of Palestine that could be lost if there is no concerted action to preserve it.

Perhaps the best example of the waning hopes and aspirations of the Palestinians is the set of pictures on the top floor. What was

once a group of graceful old homes that lined the streets in old Jerusalem has been overrun by bulldozers.

Throughout the exhibition, in practically every photograph, Ali Mahmud succeeds in drawing the attention of the onlooker to an older order that is being shamelessly replaced by a new one. Above all, the exhibition portrays a mood of real discontent with the

destruction of bedouin settings and residential homes that date from the Ottoman period. Yet it also inspires the viewer toward the belief that safeguarding Jerusalem's religious buildings and such historically significant edifices as the old city walls and gates is of paramount importance. The exhibition continues until 20 May at the Buran Gallery, in Al Hamra Street, Sweifieh, Amman.

## Moving through an aesthetic world

By Star Staff Writer

Talk about turning your home into a gallery... Well, artist Sabah Al Haddidi did just that. His home has become a place of relaxation, a place to set your anxieties aside and get away from the hurly-burly of life. Over a 10-year period, Haddidi has painted extensively. His specialty is abstract art, something he feels is necessary to his existence, yet something he is also quite comfortable with.

Haddidi has some 90 paintings hung in the interior of his house—a small proportion of the many he has produced and sold over the years. He has participated in many solo and group exhibitions, and tells *The Star* that on average he has had shows about once every three years. He says his paintings have to do

with projecting the inner senses onto the canvas, pointing out that it is the expression of the very soul. And indeed this is the feeling one gets as one wanders through his house.

But the creation of a different world on canvas is not an easy job. "First I start on the research which then involves the actual materials—color, form, texture and subject." A painting can take him from one week to many months, although Haddidi added that there is no real time span—it depends on the mood of the artist.

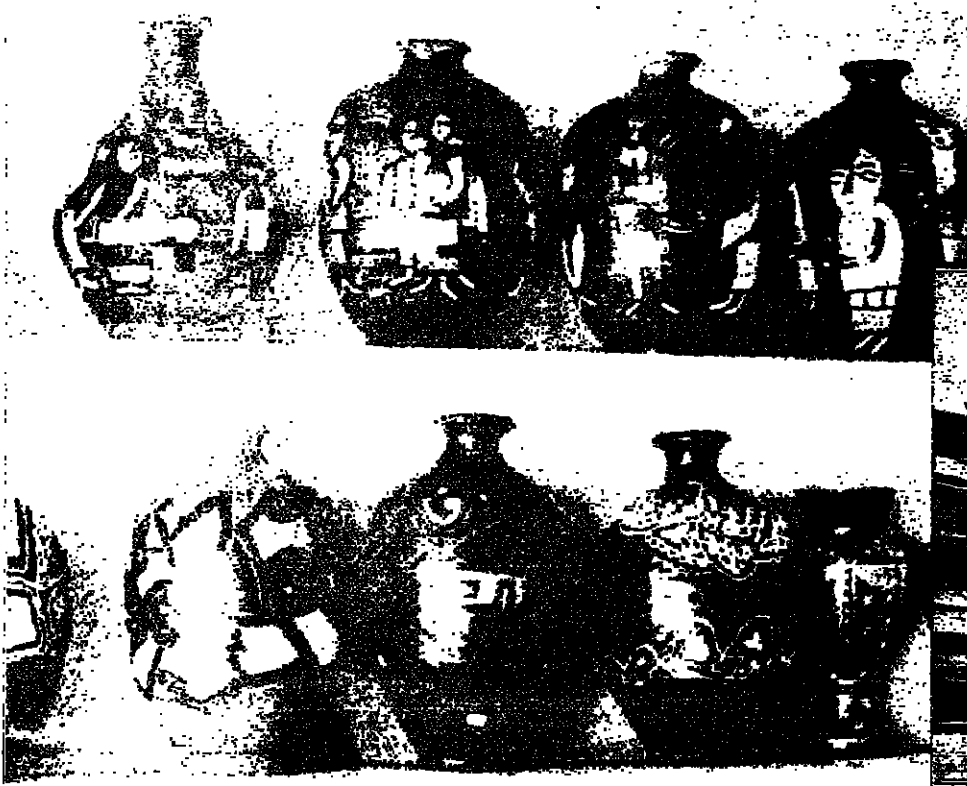
In painting upon painting, the visitor is captivated by a style whose splashes of color make Haddidi's sensibility formal in ways that are alternately enigmatic and at times electrifying.

The Syrian born painter, who lived and studied art in Belgium, says the idea is to give the viewer's eye time to contemplate, and allow him/her to forget the mundane routine of everyday life by giving them a world—capable of transporting them into another world—one of different values, concepts, and beliefs.

And in this respect he says painters have a "futuristic outlook, as art expresses absolute freedom—the most prestigious form of freedom," he noted, because it is tangible, one that you can see.

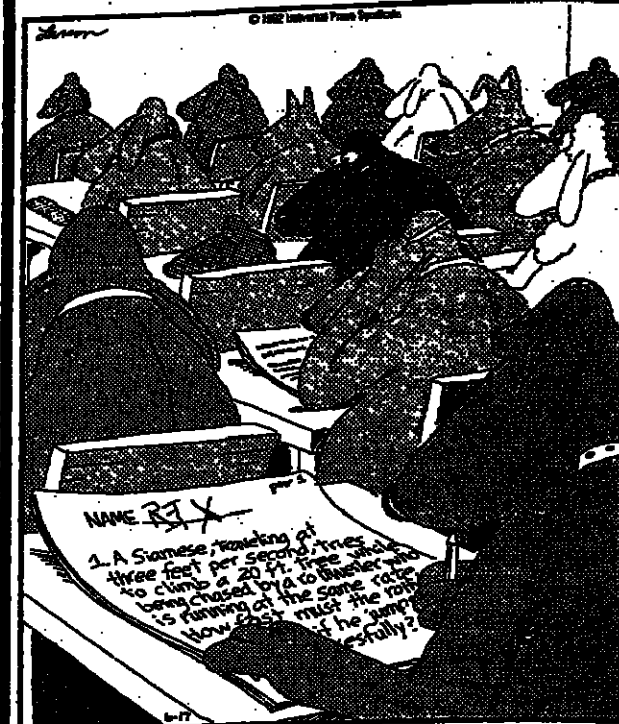
But painting on canvas is only a part of his artistic profession. He paints decorations on vases and in this, demonstrates the rich diversity of his talent, as classical Islamic ornamentation is combined with a modern touch.

As he is soon leaving to Damascus, all of his paintings are currently being offered for sale. Sabah Al Haddidi can be reached at 515 4567.



## THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Before their admission to any canine university, dogs must first do well on the CATs.

## SLAPSTIX

Being a hero is about the shortest lived profession on earth.

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

## AGENDA

### ■ Homage to Federico Garcia Lorca

Instituto Cervantes is presenting through the month of May a program of films in homage to Andalusian poet Garcia Lorca. Schedule as follows:

May 14—*Bodas de sangre* (1981). Film version of well-known Lorca play. Surreal drama in which a bridegroom and the mysterious "Leonardo" fight and mortally wound each other in the presence of the bride. In Spanish only, at Instituto Cervantes, 5 pm. A second screening of the film—this one with English subtitles, and called *Blood Wedding*—takes place May 17, at 5 pm.

May 21—*La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1987). Bernarda Alba imposes an eight-year mourning period on herself and her four marriage-aged daughters after her husband dies. The film follows the degeneration of their relationship during this period of time from a seemingly normal household into one half-crazed with morbid frustration. Dialog written by Lorca. In Spanish only, 5 pm.

May 28—*Bodas de sangre* (1938). Original film version of Lorca play. Details above. In Spanish only, 5 pm.

May 17—*My Name Is Brecht*—Exile in USA (1989). Documentary film in German with English subtitles about Brecht's difficulties during his exile in the US. 7 pm.

May 20—*Die Mutter* (1971). Film version of Brecht's theatrical adaptation of a novel by Maxim Gorky. In German only, 7 pm.

May 24—*Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1960). Film of famous Brecht play chronicling the Thirty Years' War. In German only, 7 pm.

■ Darat al Funun's Thursday evening film series—concentrating in May on Latin American artists—continues with a film about Mexican artist Diego Rivera on May 14—*I Paint What I See*—followed on May 21 by one on the fiery and eccentric painter—

incidentally Rivera's wife—Frieda Kahlo, entitled *Portrait of an Artist*. Both films are at 6 pm.

■ At the American Center (Abdoun): Films with flowers for a theme.

May 14—*A Bed of Roses* May 21—*Steel Magnolias* Shows begin at 5 pm.

■ Fresh from Toulouse. French musical group Zebda will perform their characteristic patchwork of rap, rai, rock and musette. Two performances:

May 16—King Abdullah Garden, 7:30 pm. Tickets are JD 3, and are available at the door.

May 17—University of Yarmouk, Irbid, at 3:30 pm. Admission free.

■ Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan's show, "A Suite of Heads," continues through 25 May at Darat al Funun.

■ Also at Darat al Funun, Lebanese/American artist and poet Etel Adnan's "Artist's Books of Art and Poetry" continues until 21 May.

■ At the Goethe Institut, an exhibition of theater posters for Bertolt Brecht plays performed by the legendary theater group Berliner Ensemble between 1949 and 1956 will run from May 17 to 28.

■ At The American Center: Exhibitions by jewelry artist Suzanne El Masry and sculptor Samer Tabbaa run until May 25.

■ The University of Jordan, in cooperation with the French Cultural Center, will present an exhibition of materials relating to the work of French architect Christian de Portzamparc. The opening, on May 18 at 11 am, will be followed by a symposium on Portzamparc's designs, which have taken their place in urban landscapes from New York to Paris to Tokyo.

■ At the British Council, Rainbow Street, Jabel Amman.

May 19—*Doctor Zhivago*. Emotional, three hour passion play full of Romance, Romanovs and the Russian Revolution. Come cry your eyes out with Julie Christie, Geraldine Chaplin and Omar Sharif. 7 pm.

May 20—*The Little Prince*. Children's film (recommended for ages 4 to 6). 6 pm.

May 26—*Never Say Never Again*. Sean Connery as James Bond in a film studied with—what else?—girls, gadgets and gripping action, all of which 007 handles with his usual *savoir faire*. 7 pm.

■ At the Goethe Institut (near Third Circle): May 16—*Ein Hund namens Beethoven*. Children's film in German (age 6 and over). In the Institut, 5 pm.

■ In honor of the 100th anniversary of Bertolt Brecht's birth, three films will be presented at the Institut:



# The Star's GUIDE

## Programs on JTV from 9—15 May

### ENGLISH PROGRAMS

#### SATURDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Johnny Quest  
3:30—1 Wanna Be...  
4:00—Neighbors  
4:30—Ocean Wilds  
5:00—French Program  
6:00—Acapulco Bay  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—Discovery Magazine  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—You Bet Your Life  
8:00—Cinema, Cinema  
8:30—Prism  
9:10—Sirens  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film: *Mobsters*, starring Patrick Dempsey and Lara Flynn  
12:00—Are You Being Served

#### SUNDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—The Pumpkin Patch  
3:30—The Pink Panther  
3:30—Skipty  
4:00—The American Chart Show  
5:00—In The Wild  
6:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—A Tour in France  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Life's most Embarrassing Moments  
8:00—People and Places in Africa  
8:30—Challenges  
9:10—Renegade  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Correlli  
11:10—The Nanny

#### MONDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Fred and Barney Show  
3:30—Raider of the South Pacific  
4:00—Neighbors



Cinema, Cinema, Cinema, Saturday at 8:00 pm.

4:30—Last Frontiers  
5:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Hope and Gloria  
8:00—Perspective  
9:10—99-1 "Stone"  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Law and Order  
11:10—Bay Watch Nights

#### TUESDAY

3:00—Holy Koran

3:10—Pro Star  
3:30—Small Talk  
4:00—Bordertown  
4:30—The Health Show  
5:00—Route of Capricorn  
6:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Step by Step  
8:00—What would you do  
8:30—Rhodes  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film: *Victim*



### Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): The Fifth Element
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149): ED
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): The Mirror Has Two Faces / Titanic
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Forget Paris
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Titanic
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): Hanbeh Wanneh (Arabic)
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Kamanana (Arabic)

of the Haunt, starring: Sharon Lawrence and Shirley Knight  
12:00—Metro Café

#### WEDNESDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Mr Bogus Show  
3:30—Oliver Twist  
4:00—The Album Show  
5:00—French Program  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Campus Cops  
8:00—Envoy Special  
9:10—Kung Fu  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Nutcracker (Mini Series)

#### THURSDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Dinky Dis  
3:30—The Animal Park  
4:00—French Programs  
4:30—Blue Water Dreaming  
5:00—NBA Games  
6:00—The Burned Bridge  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Big Brother Jake  
8:00—Great Romance  
8:30—Dr. Quinn, The Medicine Woman  
9:10—The Oprah Winfrey Show  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film: *Pay Back*, starring: Mary Tyler Moore, Fredrick Land  
12:00—Can't Hurry Love

#### FRIDAY

3:00—Holy Koran  
3:10—Teddy Ruxpin  
3:30—Wishbone  
4:00—He Shoots, He Scores  
4:30—Tarzan  
5:30—The French Program

7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Program  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—The Fresh Prince of Bel Air  
8:00—Life on the Internet  
8:30—The Brain "Evolution"  
9:10—Babylon-5  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Nutcracker (Mini Series)

#### PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

##### SAMEDI

17:00—Faut pas rêver  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Magazine L'œuf de Colomb

##### DIMANCHE

18:00—Bonne espérance  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—E-M6

##### LUNDI

17:00—Thalassa  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Cinq sur Cinq

##### MARDI

18:00—Les cours brûlés (3)  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Fractales

##### MERCREDI

18:00—Ushuala  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—E-M6

##### JEUDI

16:10—L'école des fans  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Atomes crochus

##### VENREDI

17:30—Fort Boyard  
19:00—Le Journal  
19:15—Allo la Terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV

### Fashion

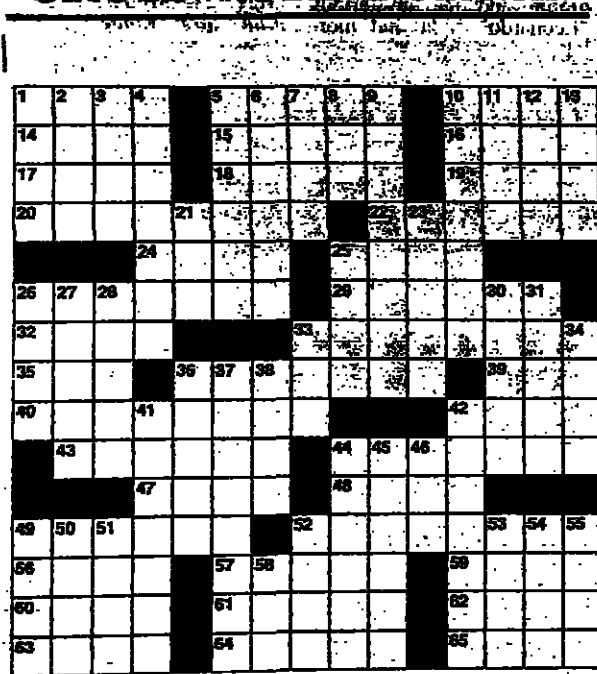


### The Odd Couple II

Once incompatible occupants of the same New York apartment, they now find themselves confined to the same California rental car, a situation tolerable only because they're on their way to the same wedding. The film starring: Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Lisa Waltz, Jonathan Silverman, Jean Smart, N. Simon and Christine Baranski



### CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS**
- Hot tubs
  - Las Vegas main street
  - Hourglass
  - Word on a door
  - Instant
  - Now, me down to sleep
  - Song from Placido
  - Leader
  - Alaskan city
  - Maria to Marile
  - In a chair
  - Teal
  - Dead's sister
  - Asian temples
  - Indian fabric
  - Deary case choice
  - Vacation home
  - Reason for
- DOWN**
- overline
  - glass
  - "Maria"
  - Meetings
  - Forehead
  - Necessary
  - Lifetime
  - Refuse
  - Spoken
  - Fleet of warships
  - Like an emerald?
  - Castle
  - defense
  - Reputation
  - Heavenly
  - Adlike tool
  - Fernando or Lorenzo
  - Obey
  - Perfume
  - Cucumber, e.g.
- ACROSS**
- Tiff
  - Immaculate
  - Europe's neighbor
  - Beauty parlor item
  - Layers
  - "We hold these"
  - Arroyo
  - Flank
  - surprise
  - Talk into
  - "Blue Eyes"
  - Thanks!
  - Pro out
  - Colored
  - Furious
  - Concluded
  - Despised
  - Kitchen items
  - Sigourney
  - Weaver
  - Barrymore
  - Cognizant
- DOWN**
- Taste
  - That guy's
  - Evergreen
  - cause
  - padding
  - Opie's dad
  - Calmed, in a way
  - Hotel lobby
  - figure
  - Blur
  - Color
  - Battering
  - Ornament
  - Travelled
  - Labyrinth
  - Notably
  - Room
  - overhang
  - Sharp blow
  - Fly alone
  - Unknown guy

### THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

**Weekly Tip:** This is an excellent time for throwing out the old to make room for the new. Tensions will run high.

**Aries (March 21-April 19).** Don't get pushed into doing something you'll regret. There are all kinds of hassles, but you should be able to travel. Get started as early as possible.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20).** Back your partner against tough odds. Your support means a lot. Resist the temptation to spend. It'll be easy to waste money.

**Gemini (May 21-June 21).** Hide out and get the work done. Take the phone off the hook. You won't have time to talk to anyone.

**Cancer (June 22-July 22).** Follow a hunch instead of a friend's advice. Schedule your date. These days are intense, as you try to please a demanding older person.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22).** A friend's stubbornness may drive you from home. You'll be back again soon and happier. Don't get distracted by a playmate or you'll be working late.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** A startling revelation at home upsets you. Commiserate with a loved one and soon the problem will be practically forgotten.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** Take on extra work. It'll be fun, and you can use the money. Dig for the truth and you'll find a couple of startling revelations.

**Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** You may not be able to overpower your favorite adversary, but you can sure put up a good fight. And you may get a couple of good points across.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** Be decisive and get rid of a bunch of stuff you don't need any more. That'll give you more time to play and a lot more room to do it in.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** Have friends over to your place. It'll help you relax after a tough day. They will also give you tips on how to save money.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** Figure out what a stern taskmaster wants without being told again, and you'll pass the big test.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20).** Ask someone far away for the money you need. You'll do best at work if you focus on the concept instead of the details.

**If You're Having a Birthday This Week:** Want to be a wealthy person? Start by thinking like one. That does not mean spending more.

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

### PERKY & BEANZ by Russell Myers



### ELWOOD by Ben Templeton & Tom Forman

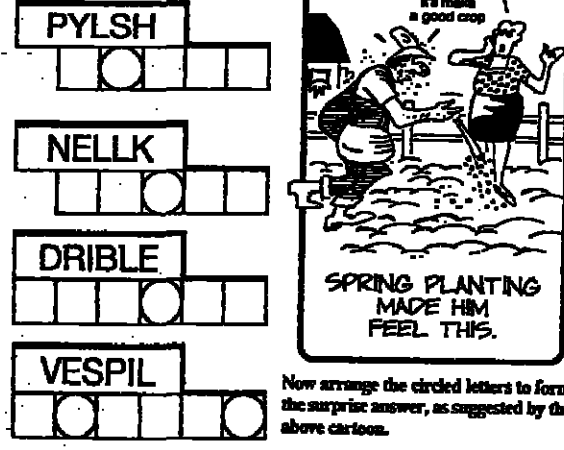


### CATFISH by Fred Wagner & Tom Cone



### Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: ○○○○

Answers: Spring planting made him feel this. SAYS PLANTING MADE HIM FEEL THIS. SAYS PLANTING MADE HIM FEEL THIS.

### Words of Wisdom

If money becomes your god, it will plague you like the devil.

An ounce of parenting is worth a pound of discipline.

Human beings' greatest teacher is Nature.

Lack of work isn't the same as rest. The least occupied can be in the most turmoil.

Every new day should build upon knowledge gained yesterday.

You never fail if you never make an effort.

### CHARLIE



"Charlie, I am the 'Good Luck' fairy! To win the million dollar state lottery tomorrow, play the following number, 537N43-95N21. I repeat, 865547-885H! Don't forget, 70054-VL3-617E!"

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

### Subscribe to

**The Star**  
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
P.O. Box: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Delivery Local Mail Air Mail

### The Star

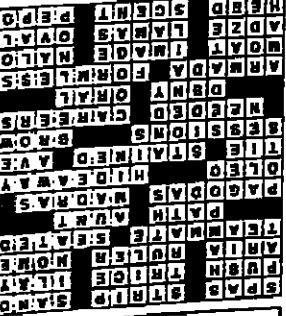
Tel. 4652380 / 4645380 Fax. 4648298  
P.O. Box. 9313 Amman (11191) Jordan  
E-mail: Star@nets.com.jo

Jordan: JD 20 (Home delivery or by Post)  
Arab countries: US\$ 100,  
Europe - USA - Canada - Australia: US\$ 150.

### OFF THE WALL

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

If a man's education is finished, he is finished.



© 1998, Tribune Media Services



Minds, machines and metaphysics

# Religion gaining a place in science curriculums

By Mary Rourke

PASADENA, California—An undergraduate at the California Institute of Technology can actually sign up for a New Testament class this semester. And at this intensive science institute, religion courses can have an odd appeal: "One student said he enrolled because he kept losing at 'Jeopardy!'," says Jack Miles, a visiting professor teaching courses in the Bible and world religions.

Miles' bestselling book *God: A Biography* (Alfred Knopf, 1995) won a Pulitzer Prize, and his career has spanned book publishing, newspaper editing and editorial writing (at the Los Angeles Times), college administration and teaching; he is currently on leave from the Claremont Graduate University to write a book about Jesus as a literary character, the protagonist in the New Testament. Still, at Caltech, the catalog is dense with cosmology, geology and radio astronomy courses, and a book about God is not the most likely credential.

"Science tends to be patronizing toward religion," observes Miles, whose rapid speech never fails to access the precise word. "When dialogue occurs, it seems to come from the religious side."

Miles spent a number of years as a Jesuit and studied Near Eastern languages at Harvard University. Still, belief in God or adherence to religion is not a prerequisite for his Caltech courses. His world-survey class looks at religion as culture, and the syllabus includes a textbook by religion historian Huston Smith.

The first lecture in Miles' New Testament class concentrated on the geography and social history of the area around Jerusalem, where Jesus was born. Miles described his own view on the material in a handwritten note.

"The course will be neither an historical nor a theological introduction to the New Testament," he explained, "but a literary appreciation of it." Miles' students admit to feeling the usual frustrations that scientists equate with religion.

"The language of the Bible is very vague," says Shane Ross, a 22-year-old physics major in Miles' New Testament class. "What do they mean by miracle?"

Yet, Ross has enrolled in two of Miles' classes this year and attends a Bible study group led by students as well as Sunday services at two churches near campus.

"Toward the end of high school, I was craving meaning," he says. "I started shopping around, wondering, 'Where is the truth?' That is the scientific question."

Even so, it is a rare event for God to have any official business at Caltech.

"Religion has hardly ever been taught here," says Daniel Kevles, a history professor who recommended Miles for the one-year fellowship. "Some of us have been talking about offering comparative religions or a world religions course as an important



part of world history. We're not offering an indoctrination in religion."

Five students enrolled in Miles' New Testament class, but 40 signed up for the world religions survey—four times more than he expected. Several other science schools have noticed a similar interest by students and are finding ways to fill gaps.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which has offered Bible study courses for more than 40 years, recently grew bolder. This year, "God and Computers: Minds, Machines and Metaphysics" was offered as a course and lecture series organized by Professor Anne Foerst of the school's artificial intelligence laboratory.

Two years ago, MIT made a \$3-million commitment to renovate an old building on campus for use as the Religious Activities Center. Muslim students now meet five times daily in the prayer room, and Jewish students serve a kosher dinner on Fridays.

"Our graduates will be world leaders in 30 years," says Robert Randolph, dean of undergraduate education. For the sake of world peace, Randolph says, "We need to teach young people how to talk to each other now, while they're at MIT."

Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, whose

programs in computer science and engineering are rated among the top five in the country, offers a minor degree in religious studies that attracts a growing number of science students. For a course in early Christianity this semester, 14 of the 24 students are science majors.

UC Berkeley now includes the Center for Theology and Science as part of the Graduate Theological Union, which is under the university umbrella. The center was founded by physicist Robert Russell in 1981 to encourage interaction between the two disciplines. Many of the center's faculty and students hold degrees in the sciences.

If science and religion are growing closer, Miles says, ecological problems are the magnet.

"You can't talk about the environment without talking about the sciences," he says. "The extinction of the species is part of evolutionary biology." At the same time, ecology has captured greater attention among theologians and ethicists.

Ross finds students to be more open to religion than professors. "My faith in scientists has been shaken at Caltech," he says. "Faith is everywhere, even in science. Scientists have their own religion. They like to think they don't need faith, but they do—faith, for instance, that the fundamental laws of nature will cross all lines at all times." Ross sees scientists as nonreligious. Anthony Ho, a 20-year-old physics major in Miles' New Testament class, is less specific.

"The subject of God is pretty much avoided by scientists," he says.

Ho signed up for Miles' course with some concerns.

"I find the approach a little unsettling," he says. "Treating the Bible as literature, not inspired truth, is the hardest thing for me to get used to." His scientific frame of mind has helped. "There's no reason why the Bible shouldn't be held up to critical analysis," he says. "Religion and science can be true simultaneously. They are not diametrically opposed." It surprised him to find Caltech offering courses in the Bible. "I would be just as surprised to find a course on the Koran, or any other specific, highly religious text," he says.

Religion does not mix well with a career in science. In his view, "My faith and avocation are in different worlds," he says. "Faith is inherently a noble thing. I don't see any need to attempt to reconcile the world to the things I believe."

Ross expects to continue studying Scripture and possibly blend his interests as a career. He isn't sure he'll even sign up for another religion course if it's offered. "It depends on what is foremost on my schedule," he says. "At a school like this, science comes first."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Cloth of gold from the east

By Susan Moore

THE CHILD'S coat is 1,200 years old. Its lustrous, richly colored and boldly patterned silk is also in pristine condition. Hung on its display pole with arms outstretched, the pattern of paired and stylized ducks framed in roundels by rows of pearls is shown to stunning effect. While elements of this design derive from Sassanian Iran, other motifs belong to Sogdiana where this garment was almost certainly woven, less a country than a confederation of city states including Bukhara and Samarkand. Its lining, however, like the accompanying white silk damask trousers, were the product of Tang dynasty China.

With its first, knock-out exhibit, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York sets out its stall for When Silk Was Gold, the first exhibition devoted to the silks and embroideries produced and traded along that great chain of caravan cities and shrines known as the Silk Road, which looped its way across Central Asia to link China and the Roman Empire.

The show brings to public attention a remarkable corpus of textiles which has only recently and unexpectedly come to light. Though the catalogue coyly avoids making this explicit, these textiles have come trickling out of Tibet over the last 15 years. Their remarkable state of preservation is due to the Tibetan climate; their appearance on the western art market a consequence of the Chinese desecration of the Tibetan monasteries. Together, the collections of Cleveland Museum of Art and the Metropolitan represented here constitute the most extensive and important holding of 8th-15th century central Asian and Chinese textiles in the west.

This whole field of scholarship is largely uncharted territory. With the help of this new cache of material, however, the Cleveland and Met curators, Anne Wardwell and James Watt, have made spectacular progress in documenting the

still only partially understood transmission of motifs, designs, techniques and, indeed, craftsmen along the Silk Road, and the degree of cultural cross-pollination that these textiles illustrate. Silks and embroideries, after all, would have been the primary vehicle for the migration of any motif from one part of Asia to another.

Two fragments of 11th-12th century *kesti*, or silk tapestry, for instance, have been hailed by Watt as the long sought after "missing link," providing the proof that this silk-weaving technique was passed into China from Central Asia. Quite apart from their art historical value, these *kesti* are remarkable for the vitality and exuberance of their designs of dragons and other creatures set against brilliantly hued fields of foliage and flowers. In the hands of the Chinese, this technique was to evolve from being simply a textile tradition into a means of emulating painting.

Similar excitement greeted the discovery of a square of 12th-13th century green tabby brocade in gold with "teardrop" which, on closer inspection, each depict a falcon swooping down on a swan amid foliage and branches. It was known from the history of the Jin Dynasty that the officials who attended the emperor on the annual spring hunt wore uniforms embroidered with gold patterned with a "hawk attacking a swan," but no one had ever seen this silk before.

Luxury silks, as this example vividly demonstrates, were rank. Along with silk embroideries, they were used for imperial and diplomatic gifts, in Confucian ritual and ceremony and as payment of taxes and tribute. To the Chinese silk was currency, to the western Asian and European elite it was as valuable as gold. Under the Mongols, it became gold itself, the fabulously luxurious "cloth of gold" that dazzled Marco Polo and other early European travellers.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this show is the light it sheds on the cultivation of the Mongols, a people rather

better known historically for their capacity for rape, pillage and slaughter than for any refined artistic sensibility. The Mongols were the first foreigners to conquer all of China and the Mongol period, defined from 1206 when Chinggis became Great Khan to the demise of the Yuan Dynasty in China in 1368, saw the greatest expansion of trade and tribute in Eurasian history. (Most of what survives in the west was preserved in church treasures; much of what survived in Tibet probably came through Mongol patronage of Buddhist monasteries.)

Silk craftsmen and goldsmiths rarely perished at the hands of these invaders—they were captured and resettled. The Mongols thought nothing of transporting entire colonies of craftsmen—on one occasion no less than 3,000 Moslem households—hundreds or thousands of miles from northern China or Eastern Iran to Mongolian cities to serve the ruling elite. There they found improved social status and greater financial reward. What they produced was an extraordinary intermingling of Central Asian, Moslem, Uyghur and Chinese techniques and designs.

For nomadic peoples, sumptuous textiles for robes or tent linings were the ultimate luxury goods, far more highly valued than painting or sculpture. The particular passion of the Mongols were silks woven with gold threads, a "cloth of gold" in which both ground and pattern are gold, the latter simply delineated by the silk foundation weave. Faced with these shimmering cloths, patterned with winged lions, griffins and falcons and obviously the products of imperial workshops, with items like imperial boots or tiny purses where the pattern was scaled to the size of the finished object, one soon realizes that these early textiles are of matchless sophistication and technical skill. Given the constraints of showing light-sensitive materials, we shall not see them again for at least a decade.

Financial Times Syndication

High IQ makes happier people

# Genius no longer realm of 'weirdos'

By Victoria Griffith

AN EPISODE of the popular "Leave it to Beaver" television series in the US in the early 1960s reveals the discomfort felt then with the intellectually gifted.

In the show, Beaver's test scores are switched with those of another student, and everyone mistakenly believes he is a genius. His teachers urge him to transfer to a special school; his parents wonder if he will have a normal life. In the end, Beaver and his family are relieved to discover it is all just a misunderstanding.

Fast forward a few decades to the recent Oscar-winning film "Good Will Hunting," and it is clear that attitudes have changed. Sure, the genius hero of the movie has a few deep psychological problems, but in the end he gets the girl, a great job and a lifestyle his friends can only envy.

There was once a prejudice against the gifted," says David Elkind, a professor of child development at Tufts University in Massachusetts. "Now people see it as a way to get what you want in life." The shift in attitudes means parents now want genius offspring, and they are going to ever greater lengths to achieve that goal.

Those who believe genius is inherited are turning to special sperm banks that accept donations only from the intellectually qualified. The Repository for Germinal Choice is nicknamed the "Nobel Sperm Bank" because of its preference for Nobel prize-winning donors in doing booming business.

For those who fall on the nurture side of the debate, there are special toys and lessons that promise to boost intelligence quotients. Baby stores sell special recorders for pregnant mothers to attach to their bellies so their fetuses can listen to Tolstoy novels.

Ambitious parents are employing tutors to teach their three-year-olds to read. There is even a new line of computers for the under-two set, called "lapware," because the target users must be held by a parent.

According to child experts and those who study genius, many myths about the intellectually gifted have little to do with reality. A great deal of scientific progress has been made in recent decades in understanding genius, although the issue is often complicated by conflicting definitions over

the term.

Many child experts say we are all gifted in some way meaning everyone, and therefore no one is a genius. Others restrict the category to the elite group of people who actually change the course of history—Darwin, Goethe and Einstein, for example.

The standard definition of genius is anyone with an IQ of 150 or more less than one in 1,000 people. The concept has been heavily criticized. Since such tests measure logical reasoning rather than creativity,

Yes and no, say experts. Genetic disposition probably plays an important part. According to a 1995 study, the children of the Nobel Sperm Bank boast significantly higher intellectual ability than the rest of the population.

While heredity is key, it is unlikely that genius can exist in a vacuum. Research by author Ellen Winner showed that parents of the intellectually superior tend to be unusually supportive, providing emotional comfort as well as intellectual stimulation. And the idea that a genius can survive a traumatic childhood (as in "Good Will Hunting") to become an all-around prodigy is silly, say experts. "I can accept that there could exist a diamond in the rough in a single discipline, like math or music," says Gardner. "But no one can be a genius in all academic disciplines, much less if they lacked the right environmental input."

Yet experts sound a note of caution to parents pushing their children to early learning. No amount of encouragement will turn an average child into a genius. "While environmental stimulation may raise IQs 20 points or so, you're not going to get from 100 to 150 no matter what you do," says David Feldman, an expert on genius with Tufts University.

In fact, added pressure may lead children to turn their backs on learning altogether. "If you push a child beyond his or her capacity, the result is likely to be a poor self-image and a failure cycle," says renowned pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton. Only one in 100 children in the US learns to read before the age of five. Most simply do not have the capacity for abstract reasoning that is necessary to accomplish the task.

The best advice, say experts, is to stimulate children to perform academically only as long as they seem to be having fun. Teaching a three-year-old to read is not necessarily harmful, if the pre-schooler is to the task and enjoys it. "But once they start to see it as a chore, you've lost them," says Feldman. "Then even a genius may grow up to be an under-performer."

Financial Times Syndication



artists and performers whom many of us would consider geniuses—Picasso and Beethoven come immediately to mind—may not have had high IQs. Still, the above 150 standard has the advantage of making intelligence measurable, and therefore subject to research.

By the standard definition, being a genius is very desirable. A study initiated in 1921 by Lewis Terman and continued today by other researchers shows that people with very high IQs tend to live and stay married longer, and generally have fewer emotional problems.

In light of this kind of research, it seems natural that parents should want their children to have high IQs. That leads to another question. Can geniuses be created?

Only on RJ.  
Starting May 1st.

فقط على الملكية الأردنية  
ابتداءً من ١ أيار

ROYAL JORDANIAN



# The Star

Edited by Abdul Hamid Adasli

## Hopes and headaches for Italian team coach

MILAN—Italy's coach Cesare Maldini has plenty of hopes but also a few headaches over the form of his World Cup squad, just a month before they fly out to France '98.

Top on the list of worries is his own son and team skipper Paolo, who along with that other fixture of the Italian defence, Alessandro Costacurta, is giving cause for concern at AC Milan. The two men who are supposed to keep the world at bay have conceded eight goals in their last two matches, with Maldini Junior also conceding a penalty in their Italian Cup final defeat to Lazio. Maldini was rated only five out of 10 by the Italian press after 5-0 drubbing against AS Roma. The Gazzetta dello Sport asked "Where was he when Zinedine conceded the penalty and when Paolo Sergio scored? Who knows?"

Costacurta was rated four out of 10 and branded "unwatchable" by Italy's most authoritative sports paper, who added: "Poor Italy!"

The Italian national defence was already proving a headache with the absence of Juventus stalwart Ciro Ferrara, who is unlikely to recover in time from a broken leg.

On the bright side, Lazio's Alessandro Nesta is the most exciting and talented young defender to come up through the ranks. But two recent lapses in concentration by the 22-year-old cost Lazio their shot at the league title and the first leg of the Italian Cup final. Against Juventus in Rome, Nesta mis-timed his jump for a corner and allowed Filippo Inzaghi, who was waiting behind him, to nod home the only goal of their championship showdown. Three days later, a mix-up between Nesta and Alessandro Grandoni allowed AC Milan's George



Weak to head home the winner from goalkeeper Sebastiano Rossi's mighty drop-kick.

Two lapses certainly don't cancel out a fine league season. But careless mistakes in big matches are clearly not what any national coach wants to see in the run-up to the World Cup finals.

Milan's problems will meanwhile have done midfielder Demetrio Albertini's morale no good at all, and there has been little but lacklustre performances from Chelsea's Roberto Di Matteo.

On the plus side, though, Francesco Moriero has blossomed at Inter Milan and scored two cracking goals for Italy against Paraguay last month.

Another midfielder candidate, AS Roma's Francesco Di Biagio scored twice in a fine performance on Sunday and veteran Diego Baggio is back at his best. Baggio, who notched home a memorable winner for 10-man Italy against Norway at UEFA Euro, made a superb free-kick goal in Sunday's 2-2 draw with Sampdoria and only the post denied him a fine goal on Sunday.

Tuttosport's verdict was: "Good news for Cesare Maldini."



Maldini's strike force at the World Cup will be built on Juventus' Alessandro Del Piero and Atletico Madrid's Christian Vieri, both of whom have had fine seasons so far. What's less comforting is that despite no shortage of class and commitment, Pierluigi Casiraghi has only scored three league goals this season, while Olympique Marseille are still undecided as to whether to keep Fabrizio Ravanelli for another year.

There is no shortage of competition for their places, though. Roberto Baggio has scored in each of his last three games for Bologna, bringing his total to 19 for the season, while Enrico Chiesa flashed in a superb 25-yard free-kick for Parma. Inzaghi is also hoping to get his chance after scoring 24 goals in his debut season for Juventus.

The World Cup countdown is now starting in earnest for Maldini Senior, who has only two league games and two European cup finals left to watch before deciding his squad for France. Faith and the form guide will be at his side when he takes that decision on May 22. And aside from the 22 chosen players, another 50 million people are counting on him to get it right.

## The arrival of a rough and gentlemanly sport

By Yannick Laine  
Special to The Star

AFTER A slow start, rugby has finally begun to emerge as a popular sport in Jordan this year. The Jordanian Rugby Club now has its own pitch where the first regional tournament was organized last month.

Watching a rugby match without knowing the rules may seem a bit nonsensical. "What's going on?" the uninformed spectator is inclined to ask, watching two teams of fifteen players running, passing the oval ball backward and tackling each other like barbarians. "What a brutish sport!"

Actually it is British one. Born in the school of Rugby in England in 1823, the sport has always valued good spirit and fair play. Unlike soccer, a referee will never be pushed by angry players. All his decisions are gracefully accepted and in case of a dispute, he may penalize the unruly team.

At the end of 1980s a group of British expatriates tried to import this spirit and such other rugby values as courage,

dignified engagement and fighting in the noble sense. But the initiative failed because of the Gulf War, as many expatriates had to leave Jordan.

Rugby only reappeared in 1994, thanks to Martin Cronin, then Second Secretary at the British Embassy in Amman. A few people answered his newspaper ad and these pioneers began training on the concrete tennis court of the Marriott Hotel.

Of course, on such a hard surface, the players couldn't practice tackling, and since tackling is the essence of the game, they experienced some frustration.

But the game was on the track of progress and in mid-1996, the Jordan Rugby Football Club was formed on a small plot of grassy land on the British Embassy grounds. The pitch was too small to play a full fifteen-man game, but large enough to provide enjoyment for those starved for rugby action. A Jordanian team went to Dubai in November of the same year and played their first-ever match on a full pitch—a new experi-

ence for the majority of the Jordanian players.

After testing the pleasures of true rugby, the club had to look for a full-size pitch to better prepare for future games and to form a proper fifteen side. Through the kind permission of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, they were allowed to train on an unused polo ground in Sports City. The sand dunes were smoothed and the stones thrown away, so that the rugby pitch was ready for the inaugural match in June 1997 against a visiting Royal Marines team, only half-an-hour after the goal posts were put up.

The superior playing conditions provided by the new field have encouraged more and more Jordanians to come and discover this bizarre sport that is so new in their country. "It is like soccer or American football?" most of them asked, catching the egg-shaped ball with surprise. But after the first few mistakes nearly all beginners make—like passing the ball forward—they quickly came to understand the rules of the game, and played with an increasing sense of assurance.

Thus it came as no surprise in early April, in a contest sponsored by HRH Prince Abdullah, that there were as many Jordanians as expatriates playing on the two Jordanian teams competing for the Prince Abdullah Trophy. This tournament—the first of its kind in Jordan—included teams from Cairo, Lebanon and Cyprus. The Jordanians looked far more skilled than might have been expected, given their limited practice time, and lost only in the final match against Cairo by the close score of 12-6.

After the competition all the teams joined together for the traditional post-game celebration, called "The Third Half", where they shared tales of their heroic exploits around a glass. After a match, the players are no longer enemies, or even competitors; they are just passionate athletes celebrating the glory of rugby. After all, didn't we say that this "hooligan sport" is practiced only by real gentlemen?

If you want to discover the game of rugby, there are training sessions on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 5 to 7 at Sports City. For more information, call Farah Nashwan, captain of the local team, at 461 9075.



In Rugby, one the essential objectives is to win possession of the ball. This is done in line-outs for example, when the ball is thrown in from the side.



## MONDIAL NEWS

### Liverpool's Friedel hopes to have permit renewed

■ Brad Friedel hopes to learn Friday if the British government will renew his work permit, which would allow him to stay with Liverpool.

Gordon Taylor, head of the Professional Footballers' Association, said he would support Friedel's application although the American goalkeeper failed to play in 75 percent of Liverpool's games—a government requirement for a permit renewal.

"But we as a union do have sympathy with Friedel's problems," Taylor said. "It took him so long to get the permit in the first place and he needed to get himself fit and acclimatized in English conditions before he could play."

"We view this half-a-season that he has been at Liverpool as a transition period and we will not object to the issue of a new permit, although there are several players who have been in England a lot longer than Friedel who will not get new permits."

Liverpool finished the season Sunday against Derby. Friedel, who joined Liverpool in December from the Columbus Crew of Major League Soccer, is the No. 2 goalkeeper on the US national team behind Kasey Keller, who plays in England for Leicester.

### First Wives Club

■ Coach Philippe Troussier hopes to use women as a motivating factor for the South African team.

Troussier said he will ask the South African Football Association to send the players' wives to France if the team reaches the second round, Johannesburg's Saturday Star reported.

"It is important for the morale of the players, and I think that I am the only coach who will be thinking this way," Troussier was quoted as saying.

The South African team will be based in Vichy outside of Paris because it is a "quiet city with no pressure," Troussier said.

### Goalkeeper Out

■ Nigeria goalkeeper Ike Shorunmu broke his right arm in a game for FC Zurich in Friday's 2-1 loss to Grasshoppers and will miss the World Cup, Zurich spokesman Guido Tognoni said Saturday.

Shorunmu collided with Grasshoppers' Mats Gren shortly before halftime in Friday's game. The 31-year-old Nigerian goalkeeper underwent surgery and will remain in a hospital for about three days.

Grasshoppers clinched the Swiss League title with the win.

### Saudis overcome Trinidad and Tobago

■ World Cup finalists Saudi Arabia beat Trinidad and Tobago 2-1 in a warm-up match on the Cote d'Azur on Saturday.

Playing the same side that drew 1-0 with fellow finalists Jamaica last week, the Saudis went in front after 16 minutes through striker Sami Al-Jaber.

Both sides constructed good build-up movements and Trinidad and Tobago equalized three minutes later with a fine shot from striker Mrazo Knight.

After the interval, the Saudi defense remained under pressure but the Trinidad and Tobago forwards were regularly caught in the offside trap.

The Saudis, also dangerous up front, came close when Husain Abdulghani's 78th minute shot from a tight angle crossed the face of goal.

But a minute later, Ibrahim Sowayed put through a fine pass to midfielder Saeed Al-Owairan, who scored the winner.

### US squad named

■ US national soccer team coach Steve Sampson Tuesday named 20 of the 22 players who will represent the United States in the 1998 World Cup in France. Sampson also named eight alternates.

DC United defender Eddie Pope and Jeff Agoos were selected, as was former University of Virginia midfielder Claudio Reyna. United forward Roy Lassiter, recently acquired from the Tampa Bay Mutiny, narrowly missed the cut, Sampson said during a conference call. Lassiter and United midfielder Tony Sanneh were named alternates.

Sampson said he considered giving alternate status to United midfielder and former US captain John Harkes after the two met in Los Angeles on Monday night, but he decided against it. However, Sampson didn't rule out naming Harkes to the final roster, due June 2.

Sampson said he might wait until after the US team's final pre-World Cup game, against Scotland on May 30 at RFK Stadium, to fill the last two openings.

The leading candidates are midfielder Tab Ramos, who is returning from a major knee surgery and playing for the New York/New Jersey MetroStars, and Frenchman David Regis, a veteran player in the German League who is married to an American and awaiting US citizenship.



### World Cup squads:

#### Paraguay

■ Paraguay national football squad selected here late on Friday for World Cup finals:

Goalkeepers: Jose Luis Chilavert (Velez Sarsfield, Arg.), Ruben Ruiz Diaz (Monterrey, Mex.), Danilo Aceval (Union Santa Fe, Arg.)

Defenders: Pedro Sarabia (River Plate, Arg.), Celso Ayala (River Plate, Arg.), Catalino Rivarola (Gremio Porto Alegre, Bra.), Francisco Arce (Palmeiras, Bra.), Ricardo Rojas (Estudiantes, Arg.), Denis Caniza (Olimpia, Par.), Carlos Gamarra (Corinthians, Bra.)

Midfielders: Julio Cesar Enciso (Inter de Porto Alegre, Bra.), Roberto Acuna (Real Zaragoza, Spa.), Edgar Aguilera (Cerro Cora, Par.), Carlos Morales (Gimnasia de Jujuy, Arg.), Carlos Paredes (Olimpia, Par.)

Forwards: Miguel Benitez (Espanyol, Spa.), Julio Cesar Yegros (Cruz Azul, Mex.), Jorge Zampos (Beijin Guoan, Chn.), Jose Cardozo (Toluca, Mex.), Aristides Rojas (Union Santa Fe, Arg.), Cesar Ramirez (Sporting Lisbon, Por.), Hugo Brizuela (Argentinos Juniors, Arg.)

#### Chile

■ Chilean coach Nelson Acosta has named a 25-man squad for the World Cup finals in France. Acosta said he was selecting three more players than required in case any of them suffered an injury before travelling to France on May 29.

Goalkeepers: Nelson Tapia (Universidad Catolica), Marcelo Ramirez (Colo Colo), Carlos Rojas (Cobrembo).

Defenders: Francisco Rojas, Pedro Reyes (Colo Colo), Ronald Fuentes, Cristian Castaneda, Ricardo Rojas, Mauricio Aros (Universidad de Chile), Miguel Ramirez, Javier Margas (Universidad Catolica), Moises Villarreal (Wanderers), Jorge Gomez (Cobrembo).

Midfielders: Luis Musiri, Clarence Acuna (Universidad de Chile), Nelson Parraguez, Fernando Cornejo (Universidad Catolica), Jose Luis Sierra (Colo Colo), Fabian Estay (Toluca, Mexico), Marcelo Vega (New York MetroStars).

Forwards: Ivan Zamorano (Inter Milan), Marcelo Salas (River Plate, Argentina), Juan Carreno (Huachipato), Manuel Neira (Colo Colo), Rodrigo Barrera (Universidad de Chile).

#### Germany

■ Germany's 22-man squad for France 1998 released by coach Berti Vogts on Monday.

Goalkeepers: Andreas Koepke (Olympique Marseille), Oliver Kahn (Bayern Munich), Jens Lehmann (Schalke 04).

Defenders: Lothar Matthaus, Thomas Helmer, Markus Babel (All Bayern), Juergen Kohler, Stefan Reuter (both Borussia Dortmund), Olaf Thon (Schalke 04), Christian Wornas (Bayer Leverkusen).

Midfielders: Thomas Haessler (Karlsruhe), Andreas Moeller, Joerg Heinrich, Steffen Freund (All Dortmund), Christian Ziege (AC Milan), Michael Tarnat, Dietmar Hamann

(both Bayern), Jens Jeremies (Munich 1860).

Forwards: Juergen Klinsmann (Tottenham Hotspur), Oliver Bierhoff (Udinese, Italy), Ulf Kirsten (Leverkusen), Olaf Marschall (Kaiserslautern).

Standby: Fredi Bobic (Stuttgart), Stefan Klos, Lars Ricken (both Dortmund), Marco Bode, Dieter Eits (both Werder Bremen), Andreas Bueck (Kaiserslautern), Yves Eigenrauch, Thomas Linke (both Schalke 04), Mehmet Scholl, Christian Nerlinger (both Bayern), Olivier Neuville, Marco Rehmer (both Rosstock), Jens Nowotny (Leverkusen).

#### Japan

■ The following are the 25 players named to the Japanese national soccer team on Thursday for the Kirin Cup tournament.

The team will be cut to 22 names by June 2 for the World Cup finals. (J-League team in parentheses):

Goalkeepers: Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi (Yokohama Marinos), Seigo Narazaki (Yokohama Flügels), Nobuyuki Kojima (Bellmare Hiratsuka).

Defenders: Masami Ihara (Yokohama Marinos), Norio Omura (Yokohama Marinos), Yutaka Akita (Kashima Antlers), Naoki Kasa (Kashima Antlers), Akira Nishizaki (Kashima Antlers), Toshihide Saito (Shimizu S-Pulse), Eisuke Nakanishi (JEF United Ichihara), Daisuke Ichikawa (Shimizu youth team).

Midfielders: Motohiro Yamaguchi (Yokohama Flügels), Hiroaki Morishima (Cerezo Osaka), Hiroshi Nanami (Jubilo Iwata), Takashi

Hirano (Nagoya Grampus Eight), Hidetoshi Nakata (Bellmare Hiratsuka), Tsuyoshi Kitazawa (Verdy Kawasaki), Toshihiro Hattori (Jubilo Iwata), Shinji Ono (Urawa Reds), Teruyoshi Ito (Shimizu S-Pulse).

Forwards: Kazuyoshi Miura (Verdy Kawasaki), Shoji Jo (Yokohama Marinos), Masayuki Okano (Urawa Reds), Wagner Lopes (Bellmare Hiratsuka), Masashi Nakayama (Jubilo Iwata).

#### Netherlands

■ Dutch Coach Guus Hiddink has named his 22-man squad for the World Cup in France, media reports said on Monday.

The squad will be officially announced later. According to the reports, the squad is as follows:

Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Ajax Amsterdam), Ruud Hesp (Barcelona), Edde Goey (Chelsea).

Defenders: Michael Reiziger (Barcelona), Ferdi Vierklot (Tenerife), Frank de Boer (Ajax), Jaap Stam (PSV Eindhoven), Arthur Numan (PSV), Winston Bogarde (Barcelona).

Midfielders: Clarence Seedorf (Real Madrid), Aron Winter (Inter Milan), Ronald de Boer (Ajax), Phillip Cocu (PSV), Wim Jonk (PSV), Edgar Davids (Juventus), Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Feyenoord).

Forwards: Pierre van Hooijdonk (Nottingham Forest), Patrick Kluivert (AC Milan), Marc Overmars (Arsenal), Jimmy Floyd Haselbaink (Leeds United), Dennis Bergkamp (Arsenal), Boudewijn Zenden (PSV).

## Slow but sure, French mood being stirred by 'La Coupe du Monde'



THE WORLD Cup seemed easy for Michel Platini when he was a brilliant playmaker. As an organizer, he sometimes feels like he's being tackled from behind by his own teammates.

"France hasn't really understood the importance of the World Cup," said Platini, president of the organizing committee.

One month before the opening kickoff, France is slowly, but surely, catching World Cup fever. But the hoopla cannot hide the fact that soccer simply is not in the blood here.

The sport is a religion in many countries. Not in France.

"This isn't Italy, Spain or England. It's a different culture," said Just Fontaine, who became the hero of France's 1958 squad by scoring a record 13 goals in a single World Cup.

After leading France to its only major title at the 1984 European Championships, and into two World Cup semifinals, Platini now finds cooperation doesn't come naturally anymore—from the authorities, from businesses, from the unions.

The three major World Cup preparation events in France—the preliminary draw at the Louvre in Paris, the finals draw in Marseille and the opening of Saint-Denis Stade de

France where the final will be played—were all hit by transportation strikes.

And unions are considering further action during the June 10-July 12 tournament.

It hasn't dampened Platini's spirits.

"I'd walk to Saint-Denis if there's a strike," he snarled.

When Platini needed cash to beef up his budget, he complained bitterly that foreign firms were much more interested in becoming sponsors than local businesses.

And Paris authorities have been less than helpful in setting up the June 9 "Festival of Football," a colorful \$8 million extravaganza of four parades converging on the center of the capital to symbolize the universal spirit of the game.

"You cannot imagine the problems we have had with the police, with the administration," Platini said. "If we wouldn't have done it, I think they would have been happier."

By now, he knows you can't make everybody happy.

From around the globe, the organizing committee got 25 million requests for tickets—when only 2.5 million were available.

France had to build the 80,000-seat Stade de France in Saint-Denis because there simply wasn't a big enough stadium in the country.

Capacity at the 10 World Cup venues is among the smallest of the last quarter century.

And when the world's fans realized that two-thirds of the tickets were reserved for the French, Platini became an international target for abuse.

Thirty European parliamentarians are suing the committee and the European Union's executive commission is examining whether to impose fines over what is perceived by many as a French ticket monopoly. European soccer federations are up in arms since they can satisfy only a fraction of demand.

"The World Cup is in France, not in Britain," Platini said in defense of the ticket policy.

As Platini struggles with that controversy and other headaches, the rest of the country is slowly gearing up.

If only the home team and its coach would give more cause for optimism.

After two depressing preparation games against non-qualifiers, a 1-0 loss against Russia and a 0-0 draw in Sweden, coach Aimé Jacquet has been put on the defensive.

He was criticized in the French media when he failed to announce, as promised, his final squad of 22 players on Wednesday. "Quelle tristesse" ("How sad") lamented the sports

daily L'Equipe.

But the World Cup is about more than just France.

At the Iran House on the Champs Elysees in Paris, many of the exotic carpets have been put aside to make space for World Cup T-shirts and scarfs.

The Footix mascot is drawing big crowds. World Cup-related commercials inundate TV screens.

Fashion houses have models playing soccer, nightclubs turn out long-legged dancers in team outfits and 10 tons of officially approved World Cup condoms have arrived in France.

But not everyone is getting into the spirit.

One night spot is organizing male strip shows for all those lonely women whose partners have abandoned them for the World Cup.

An anti-World Cup group, La Coupe est Pleine ("the Cup is Full"), will distribute stickers declaring soccer-free zones and organize picnics and theater showings where soccer talk will be banned.

"We want to be protected from his deluge," said Laurent Terisse, who helped set up the group.

In that case, he can only hope France doesn't win it all. ■







## Predictable plot mars new sci-fi thriller

By Rita Kempley

A 500-billion-ton comet as unrelenting in its course as Kenneth Starr on the trail of a presidential peccadillo hurtles toward Earth with its tail blazing. Humankind is on the brink of extinction. Indeed, all life, save a lucky virus or two, will be wiped out in the upcoming collision.

An alarming scenario, surely, but one that hardly registers on the multitudinous cast of the plodding disaster drama "Deep Impact." These folks are so blasé, you'd think that scientists had predicted Peanutes from Heaven instead of world's end within the year.

So what do they do now? At the very least, you'd think they'd stock up on canned goods. But the listless characters of this mindless \$80-million drama don't do much of anything to save themselves—unless watching MSNBC counts. Apparently the cable network's "droning news" anchor Jenny Lerner (silly Tea Leoni), who first broke the story, has won the hearts and minds of the sleepy people.

Jenny thinks she's on the trail of a Washington sex scandal when she confronts a former Cabinet secretary about his relationship with "Ellie."

Actually the secretary has been working on E.L.E. (Extinction Level Event), which Jenny discovers in a secret meeting with President Tom Beck (somber Morgan Freeman). He promises to let her ask the first question at his next news conference to disclose the crisis if she'll sit on her scoop.

No reporter would, but she does and is subsequently rewarded with a plum position at MSNBC's comet crisis desk. Her recently divorced parents (Vanessa Redgrave and Maximilian Schell) are delighted with their daughter's success.

If only she could get them back together, life would be perfect. Well, except for the damned comet.

Meanwhile, the government announces that it has taken some steps toward ending the astral menace. In his solemn address, the president reveals that Space Command (chummy Robert Duvall), an aging astronaut and the crew of the new spaceship, Mission 1, will attempt to plant nukes on the comet's surface, then either nudge the comet away

or off course or blast it to smithereens.

Should the mission fail, one million Americans, 200,000 of whom have already been chosen, may survive the cataclysm in a network of underground shelters built to withstand the impact. The other 800,000 will be selected from a national lottery that is limited to those under 50 years of age.

You'd expect the fiftysomethings to raise hell, but they accept their fates with complacency. So, too, do the residents of the Atlantic seaboard, who know the comet is headed their way yet don't head for higher ground until "C-day." Humm. Natural selection? Directed by Mimi Leder ("The Peacemaker") and written by Bruce Joel Rubin ("Ghost") and Michael Tolkin ("The Player"), the movie is basically one long, dull prelude to the promised crash and its aftermath, in which a 350-foot tidal wave swamps New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. All of this takes place in the last 15 minutes of the movie and is far too unimaginatively wrought to merit the mind-numbing wait.

A third subplot focuses on the high school astronomer who co-discovered the comet (bland Elifab Wood) and his classmate (blander Leelee Sobieski). He and his family are among those going underground, but she and her parents must stay behind unless the 14-year-old couple marry. The story line has dramatic potential, but it's so predictably played out there's not a warm cockle in the house.

Leder, a veteran of such TV dramas as "ER," seems to go out of her way to avoid action or eye-catching effects. The shuttered storefronts and overturned cars suggest that there has been rioting and looting, but all we see is the corrupted, cobwebbed evidence. She does know how to capture expressions, but can't seem to connect with the characters' souls. That's probably because they haven't got any in the first place.

But there's hope. The human race gets a second chance in July in "Armageddon," which promises to do what rock plunks Planet X: this one will hit Hollywood.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Solid design makes Saab 9-5 top of line

By Tom Incantapelo

HEATED SEATS are as common as carpet lint in luxury cars nowadays, but what's a body to do in summertime when, despite the air conditioning, your buns are hot and you're cross?

If you're driving the 1999 Saab 9-5 with optional ventilated seats, you just reach to the center of the dashboard, roll a thumb-wheel up a notch or two and, in a few minutes, your nether region is comfortable again, along with your back. For about \$1,000, it means no more embarrassing perspiration stains when you alight from your car in summertime and no more clothing stuck to your skin.

The ventilated seats, used for many years in some buses, trucks and construction equipment, are a first in a passenger car and only one of many likeable features of the 1999 9-5.

On sale officially since last month, this replacement for the 9000 continues the Saab traditions of front-wheel drive and distinctive looks but makes clear that the old Saab tradition of weirdness is long in this Swedish carmaker's past.

Except for the ignition switch mounted on the center console instead of on the steering column or dash, there is nothing quirky, annoying or weird about the 9-5. Saab puts the keyhole there because it insists that's the best location. (We think it's a nuisance and also a potential hazard to have the ignition key so far out of the driver's line of sight and so easily reached by a youngster in the shotgun seat to fiddle with.)

Along with the odd keyhole location are two new engines—a 170-horsepower, 2.3-liter four-cylinder and a 200-horsepower, 3.0-liter V-6, both turbocharged, both with four valves per cylinder. The four-cylinder engine can be ordered with a five-speed stick.

The tester's V-6 provided



very strong acceleration with some torque steer—a tugging on the steering wheel under hard acceleration that is sometimes still found in front-wheel drive cars.

Much more pleasant was the near total lack of "lag" inherent in turbocharged cars as one waits for the turbo to spool up and provide that boost of power. There is so little here that one hardly knows that the turbo is even there.

The V-6 engine needs premium gas. The 9-5 is a mid-sized sedan that seems very solidly built in the Swedish tradition and rides quietly except for some tire rumble on coarse pavement. It feels nicely balanced and under control well into the extra-legal region of the speedometer.

The 9-5 is a little bigger than its predecessor, with a wheelbase 1.2 inches longer. Overall length is up 1.8

inches, width up half an inch, and height 1.1 inches. Some trunk space was lost in the transition from hatchback to sedan.

Gauges and most controls are intuitive, though the push-button climate controls are more fussy and distracting to use on the move than would be a set of three rotary dials—unless you simply set the fully automatic system on a desired temperature and let it take over rather than working it manually.

Standard in all versions are four-wheel disk brakes with antilock and Saab's reputation for going above and beyond the call to produce safe cars. Saab claims that the high tensile steel safety cage around the 9-5's passenger compartment, designed to divert crash energy around the passengers, is so innovative that it's covered by eight patent applications. It says the side structure

is designed to deflect most crash force away from the upper parts of the occupants' bodies by spreading the force across more of the car's side.

Prices for the 9-5 begin at just under \$30,000. Besides items already mentioned, that price includes fog lamps, an alarm, dual power seats, tilt and telescoping steering wheel, a seven-speaker audio system with cassette and CD players, automatic heating/air conditioning with separate zones for driver and front passenger; power windows, mirrors and locks, the latter with remote control; a driving computer; cruise control; 60-40 split folding rear seat-back; walnut trim for the dash that is so dark and highly polished we mistook it for plastic at first.

Versions with the V-6 engine begin at \$33,750 and come additionally with automatic transmission and traction control.

### Data on the Saab 1999 9-5 SE

- Engine: 3.0-liter V-6, 200 horsepower
- Transmission: Four-speed automatic, front-wheel drive
- Safety: Dual front- and seat-mounted side-impact air bags, anti-lock brakes, daytime running lamps
- Place of Assembly: Trollhättan, Sweden
- Weight: 3,410 pounds
- Trunk: 15.9 cubic feet
- Price as Driven: \$38,775, including destination charge
- EPA Mileage: 17 mpg city, 24 mpg highway

An SE model adds sunroof and a leather package and also reduces the price of the optional ventilated seats, which cost \$1,800 in the other versions but only \$925 in the SE.

The system seems pretty simple; two three-speed fans in each seat draw air through perforations in the upholstery and exhaust it out the bottom of the seat. We never had a chance to test it in hot weather, but it seems very powerful (and a little noisy, unfortunately).

The 9-5 comes as a four-door sedan only. Another model, the 1999 9-3, replacement for the 900, went on sale last month and is available as a two-door hatchback or convertible or a four-door hatchback.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## BUSINESSMAN'S GUIDE

**DIPLOMAT**  
5510427 / 8-9  
WELLO

**Comfort Hotel Suites**  
Luxury  
Comfort  
Service  
Location  
In the heart of Sweifyieh  
Tel: 856189

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale, furnished and unfurnished  
For more information call:  
Abdoun Real Estate  
5920605/5920609/079-30007  
E-mail address: abdoun@go.com.jo

LET YOUR NAME SOAR ABOVE AMMAN  
Full Color Advertising on Billboards and Banners on the Electronic Sign Boards on the Highway Side. ESTABLISHED 1988. JABAL AMMAN. ALHUSSEIN 5. DOWNTOWN call: 680367

**ORLANE Beauty Institute**  
Facial  
Body skin treatment  
Make-up  
European manicure & pedicure  
Owider Trading Est  
Tel: 695049

The First Class Hotel in Amman that has a Kitchenette in every room!!  
**DAROTEL**  
داروتيل  
Amman Tel: 607193  
P.O. Box 9403 Fax 602434  
Telex 23888 Darot Jo  
Ideal Residence for Expatriates and Businessmen

**C-TOWN**  
We save you more  
The most pleasant shopping experience... It's just about everything you need at low prices.  
Amman 7th Circle Tel: 814129

The first & best Chinese Restaurant in Jordan  
1st Circle, Jabal Amman, near Ahllyah Girls School  
Take away is available  
Open daily 12:00-3:30p.m. 7:00-Midnight  
Tel 638968

FRANCE 98 COUPE DU MONDE  
There is only one World Cup  
There is only one Orbit-ESPN sports team  
Exclusive coverage from the people who know  
Be sure to watch all the action on Orbit-ESPN and the free-to-air Promotional Channel on Arabsat 2A  
June 10th - July 12th



Orbit  
Satellite Television and Radio Network

For more information please call  
Orbit Direct at +357 909 5000  
<http://worldcup.orbit.net>

الحياتي  
ALAFI

مركز تلفزيون العالم  
World Television Center

مركز تلفزيون العالم  
World Television Center

GOODY

Enjoy Reading  
The Star Every  
Thursday Morning

Home Delivery  
For Only  
JD 20  
Annual Subscription

For more information please call 4652380 fax 4648298

مركز تلفزيون العالم



## THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH NO

Edited by Zeid Nasser

### Computer & IT companies!

Welcome to The Star's Workstation, the absolute source on what's hot and what's not in Jordan's IT market. Fax us at 4648298 or email us at Star@NETS.com.Jo with your news and views.

# CompuWare comes to Amman

AS THE computer industry gets into the cross-roads of a dynamic new era, education and training to meet the challenges of the ever-changing spectrum of information technology assumes immense proportions.

Since computers have suddenly become a part and parcel of every sphere of human activity, it is imperative to have a working knowledge of the latest and the most relevant techniques being used. Training and education needs to mature and as aspirants can be of any age group, the students have to be termed 'trainees' and the teachers are 'trainers' in the true sense of the word.

CompuBase, the franchise of one of the leading British computer training companies, is the most suited to meet the needs of persons of any age group. This was revealed in a random survey conducted by a market research team, which not only visited training sites, but also spoke to a cross-section of computer students at two major computer exhibitions in the Middle East.

Established in early 1996, CompuBase has entrenched itself firmly in the Middle East. A ceremony was recently held to celebrate the opening of a new CompuBase office in Amman, attended by Ansto Haroon, the owner of CompuBase International.

Commenting on this event, Khaled Qatishat, the Regional Manager of CompuBase said, "We call our branches said, and we currently have 15 bases in the Middle East, Oman and now Jordan. Each of these bases has earned its reputation

by offering excellent training fulfillment services. CompuBase's core business is training, and nothing more, but by blending both competence and expertise in training."

CompuBase's entire training scheme is targeted mainly at two segments—the end-user and the technical user. The



end-user can be anybody who wants to take lessons in computers, while technical users are basically people with a good technical background either as programmers, network administrators, hardware engineers, systems analysts, or specialists in the field of computers, be it hardware or

## COMPUBASE

software.

One of the most salient features of CompuBase training schemes is the "Flexible Training System" which has been invented, formulated and consolidated after intense market

research, analysis of market needs and above all, the dynamism of the computer industry itself. No institution can ever fulfill the true aspirations of a student if the period of training is fixed, and it is this major hurdle that is removed by the unique flexible training system. Under this system, a trainee can study whenever he/she has the inclination and the time, and this can be done in the same professional atmosphere of a CompuBase center.

For instance, a student who has enrolled can attend a training session for two hours a day, say at 6 pm, and return the next day from 9 am to 4 pm, then miss a whole week, or a month and come back to continue from where he/she left off. Unlimited practice sessions and free telephone support for one full year after the completion of the course have come in extremely handy for many students.

"At CompuBase, every student is a customer and CompuBase is a company and not an institution or a school, hence our service stands beyond the market's expectations," added Mr. Qatishat. "Many of our

customers are a bit dazed initially by the excellent training schemes offered. On completion they are more than thrilled that they took the wise step of enrolling with CompuBase."

## Is your computer Millenium ready or not? Find out

WORRIED YOUR computer isn't Year 2000 compliant? Some simple guidelines and publicly available software can tell you if your system is ready for the next millennium, or if it can only party until 1999.

The Millennium Bug may lurk in any of three locations on a personal computer: in software applications, in the operating system or in the BIOS, the basic instruction set that governs the computer's operation.

Once turned on, a PC relies on its BIOS (basic input/output system) to check the data stored in the system's real-time clock (RTC). The operating system then grabs the date and time from the RTC, and applications draw date information from the operating system.

Software compliance should be checked with the program's manufacturer, and there is a good chance such information can be found on the World Wide Web.

Diagnosing hardware and operating system susceptibility

proves a bit more straightforward.

Users of International Business Machines-compatible setups might face problems if their systems rely on a Pentium processor or an older chip. Some Pentiums, 486s and their predecessors, are not century date compliant.

Machines with more recent Pentium chips or Pentium II processors should have no hardware problems.

A diagnostic software utility may be downloaded free of charge from the Web site of the National Software Testing Laboratories.

The program, called YMARK2000, temporarily sets the computer's internal clock to read 10 seconds before the millennium and then monitors its ability to roll over to 2000.

Microsoft Windows, the dominant operating system for Intel-based computers, also exhibits mixed millennium compliance. Windows 98 and Windows

NT 4.0—and any evolutions thereafter—should have no century date problems. Windows 3.0 and older revisions of Windows 95 may need to be upgraded in order to elicit full compliance.

Microsoft maintains a Web site with information on the millennium readiness of all of its products. A mountain of information resides at this site, not just regarding Windows but also focused on applications like Word and Excel.

Apple Macintoshes and compatibles have been ready for 2000 since their genesis, in 1984.

Interestingly enough, however, current Macs will have trouble in the year 2994—keep that in mind if your business plans extend 28,000 years.

Mac-related millennium information can be found on Apple's Web site.

Users of Unix Microsystems computers, a Unix operating system platform, can check compliance at Sun's site.

## News update

### Interaction with the 21st Century, at the IAA Congress in Cairo

● The convergence of computer technology and media was a central theme at the World Advertising Congress held by the International Advertising Association (IAA) in Cairo from 10 to 13 May 1998.

Under the slogan 'Interaction: The 21st Century', the Congress highlighted the importance of new media, mainly Internet and digital technologies, and their growing importance.

Advertisers cannot ignore the massive potential that Internet media presents, and some very impressive figures were displayed throughout the sessions which showed that the Internet managed to attract an audience of 15 million users in a fraction of the time it took TV or radio to do so, consumers are logged in and this presents an enormous chance for marketers.

The Congress was attended by some 1,500 leading personalities in advertising, media and marketing from all over the world.

There was much focus on the Middle East and the huge

potential it holds for new media.

### Microsoft NetShow

● Microsoft Corp is announcing its special video software, which it hopes will become a standard. NetShow 3. The importance of video on-line is increasing as the Internet continues to break speed barriers, recently reaching 56 Kbps, in addition to the fact that users are crying out for solutions to problems like slow video on the Internet and inefficient software.

Accordingly, Microsoft is aggressively pursuing a strategy to create video software that overcomes difficulties, enabling a consistent quality of video delivery to users, through techniques that can be described as 'intelligent software' methods.

Microsoft is distributing NetShow with its upcoming operating system, Windows 98, to be released in July 1998.

So the digital video scene will heat up as

Microsoft vies for control of the market. As of yet, it's not exactly clear how other players will respond, but one thing is for sure: advanced video software will enhance your interactive experience of the Internet.

### COMDEX this month

● The Cairo International Conference Center will witness the first COMDEX event to be held in the Middle East.

COMDEX is a well known exhibition of consumer electronics which is regularly held in the US and Europe. It has arrived in the region and will take place from 23 to 26 May 1998.

COMDEX promises participants that they'll meet who's who in worldwide IT companies, create links with major companies from 10 countries spanning the US and the Far Middle, and Near East.



By Brigitte Doumit

Special to the Star

"Faith is Yemeni, Wisdom is Yemeni"

(The Prophet Mohammad)

AWAKENING TO the resounding chant of prayers in Sanaa is like a call for redemption. It is only 4:30 in the morning and at least an hour before the sun will break throwing its faded light on the rooftops of the old houses. The city stretches almost as far as the eye can see. It is almost a wonder that so much of the old architecture still remains intact, unaltered by human hands. The houses perch 5 and 6 stories above ground, their colour a warm, sandy brown, as if they had acquired a mild tan during centuries of exposure to the sun. On top of each window, bright, colourful stained glass windows in lunar shape—the qamaras—look out into the streets. White, decorative paintings along the rooftops and windows remind one of sugar-coated honey cakes.

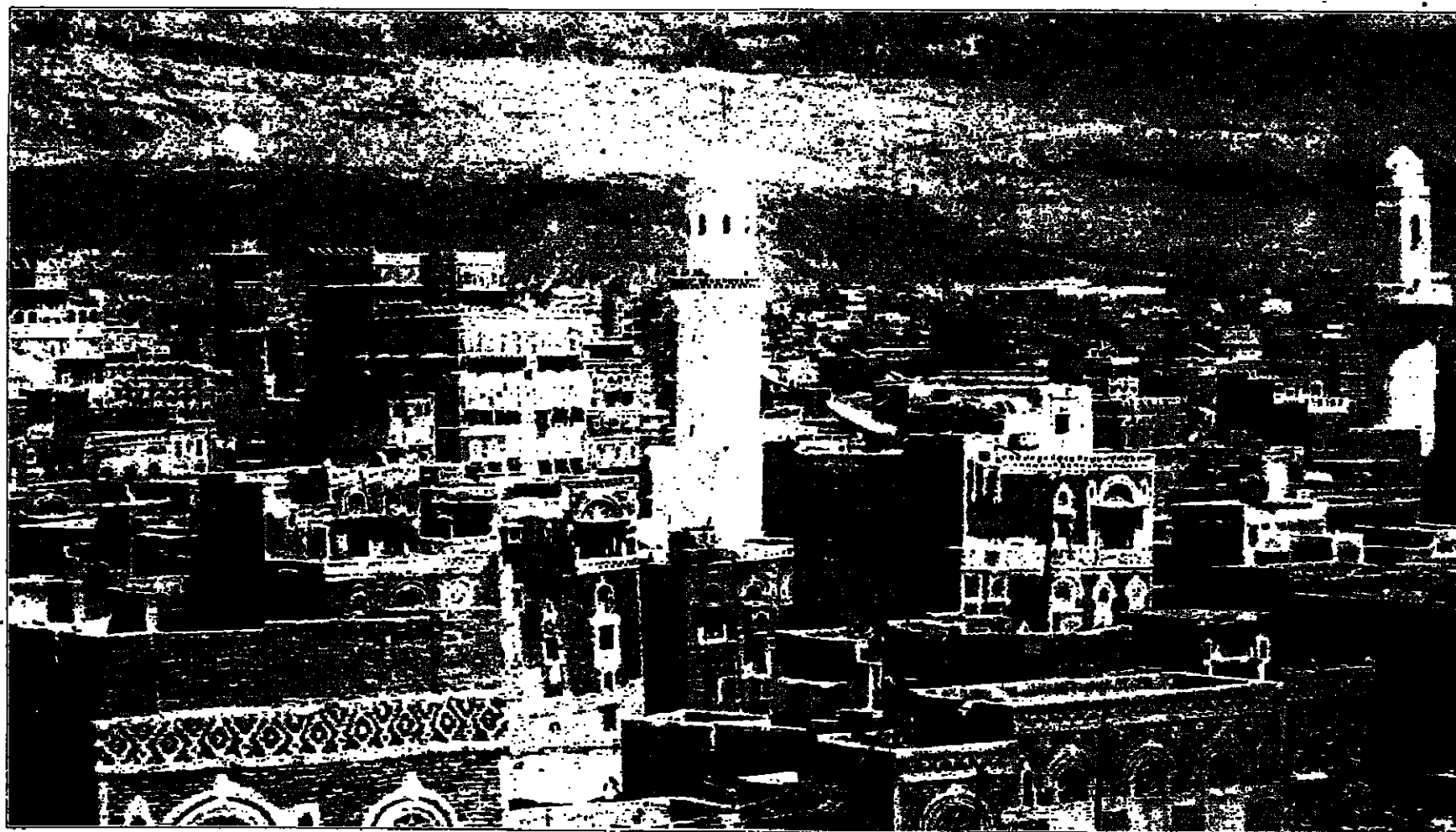
Down below the *sug* will soon come to life. For those who are *sug* lovers, Sanaa is the experience of a life-time. Entering through Bab el Yemen, winding narrow roads lead through the silk to the silver *sug* where the most exquisite items and the most intricately fashioned silver jewelry, daggers and ornaments can be purchased. In the spice *sug* the airy battle of aromas reminds one of the contests that were waged between the great nations for control of the South West Arabian trade. The mild fragrance of oregano, the pungent smell of peppers and the sensuous aroma of myrrh pervade the air.

In the *qat sug* more serious battles are being fought. Midday is the crucial hour for negotiating a good batch of leaves for a lazy afternoon. *Qat* dealers squeeze in their minuscule, barely one meter wide stalls, vying for space with their precious ware, while buyers agitatedly attempt to get the best deal of the day.

All over dogs bask lazily in the sun. I had been warned before leaving of getting a rabies vaccine. "Too many wild dogs in Yemen," a misinformed soul was quick to advise. Indeed the number of stray dogs in Yemen is beyond counting, although their equally docile tempers are equally beyond reckoning. Yemenis apparently do not believe in keeping animals in bondage and generously share their space with dogs and cats alike.

Women clad in black mingle with the proud *jambia*-bearing males while an infinite number of children add vivacity to the whole scene. A boy fights his way through the crowd with a wheelbarrow on which a huge heap of freshly baked bread has been haphazardly thrown. Yemeni bread is simply delicious—always fresh, hot and crispy. Later on I was lucky enough to witness the bread-baking ritual with the local women. Small balls of dough are flattened on a stuffed cloth device—the *mahbaze*—then stuck vertically inside a hollow drum-like oven. In a few minutes the bread is ready to be peeled off and the result is a Taboun-style bread.

Driving west out of Sanaa, we reach a high plateau where the old city of Kaukaban perches high above a cliff. On approach to the city gates we see a silent procession of men coming back from the prayers in the rain. The scene transmits to me an utter



feeling of sublimity, of trust and belief. For these people it seems so natural to go out into the fields after the Friday prayer to supplicate the Almighty for rain. It makes me aware of how much contact we have lost with nature and the divine.

We drive through the gates passing by brick and mud houses up to the edge of the cliff. From there an invisible path leads down along the ridge of the plateau to an old palace. It is a haven from the outer world, a place of refuge and solace. After sharing a hearty meal of crusty, hot bread, lamb and vegetables we withdraw to the sitting room where our first *qat* session is about to begin. Reclining on mattresses and cushions we have a spectacular view on the fertile valley below. The atmosphere is of

total serenity. Most of us are inexperienced in the art of *qat* chewing but we try our best. The session will take all afternoon and is above all a social experience. Much chatting, joking and comparing of our individual "techniques." Many who try it for the first time will say that it does not have any effect, but with patience and time it is supposed to induce a mild sense of heightened awareness.

Our next trip takes us south to Manakha and from there on an unpaved, rocky road up the hill to Hajjara. Dozens of jeeps with stickers of renowned European tourist agencies betray an all too commercial atmosphere in this place. The show of dancing with Yemeni daggers—the *jambias*—which is offered every day after lunch and dinner

does not attract my attention. It seems to be all too carefully nurtured to satisfy the taste of the traveller in search of the wilder shores of adventure in the lost land of the Queen of Sheba.

I prefer to walk around town with my three young Yemeni guides. The town of Hajjara sits on top of a hill and slides downwards along the slopes. Until 30 or 40 years ago a small Jewish community still thrived in the city. Ahmad, my young guide, takes me to the very well preserved remains of a synagogue where I manage to unearth some withered torn-out pieces of pages of the Torah among the rubble. Ahmad refuses to join in my archaeological endeavours. He tells me that powerful djinns inhabit this forgotten abode. I nod in agreement. With my

Brazilian background I fully comprehend and take these issues very seriously. It is now dusk and we carefully tread our way back to the top of the hill. Passing in front of the village mosque I spot the first muezzin I had ever seen in the Arab world. What a delight in hearing a human voice instead of a Japanese loudspeaker. It is a wondrous sight and one that will remain imprinted in my mind forever.

Yemen is a country of rich geographical diversity. Uniquely preserved mountain villages, some of them rising above the clouds, contrast with the stark beauty of once opulent desert cities like Zabid and the lush tropical coast of the Red Sea. Many places of the Tihama region remind one of Africa. Circular straw huts take, under the harsh

sun and waste away in the damp climate. Women in colourful outfits work in the fields, many of them wearing the typical straw hats of the region, others balancing the harvest on their heads. People's skin is darker, perhaps still a trace of the Abyssinian occupation of the 6th century.

We pass through Zabid, once a great center of learning, which glittered particularly under the Rasulide period in the 13th century and featured over 200 colleges. A sandstorm veils the city from the world, not a soul on the streets. But, in this not particularly welcoming city with its roasting, humid climate, descendants of the Rasulide dynasty used to dine in style accompanied by their 300 concubines in the lush gardens of the city. Even though this grand picture of Zabid seems tantalizing, the insufferable heat prevents us from wandering into the city's once glorious past. We prefer to continue as soon and as fast as possible to Al Khokha, a small fisher's village imbedded in a nature reserve where pelicans, flamingoes and hundreds of other birds compete with the local fishermen for the daily catch.

Hundreds of palm trees adorn the coastline. The weary traveller can find a bed in a hut of thatched straw and doze off to the soothing, lulling sound of rolling waves, the drumming of palm leaves against the whispering of the sea breeze and the calm bustle of the fishermen's morning activities.

From Al Khokha we drive down to Aden, a city which rose to its heights for a century during the British colonization, when it became the world's 4th largest port. Today, with the transfer of all major activities to the capital Sanaa, the city is in decline. One can still visit the house of Arthur Rimbaud, 19th century French poet, who lived in and off in Aden for 15 years.

On our way back to Sanaa, we can not miss visiting the city of Jibla, from where Yemen's famous queen Arwa ruled for half a century. Contrary to contemporary and modern Yemeni women, queen Arwa never appeared veiled. They say that her presence was so exalted and imposing that no man would have dared harbor improper thoughts about this most noble of women. There must certainly be some truth to it. In a man's world, to rule and control one of the most turbulent countries in the region for fifty years must have demanded serious statecraft as well as an iron fist.

Unfortunately we were not able to make it to Maareb. A very perilous adventure I was told by many drivers, who were in any case, not very keen to join the expedition. Anyway, not much seems to be left of the old capital of the Sabaeen empire. A few columns sticking out of the sand and the ruins of the old dam. The most impressive sight seems to be the new dam, which with a capacity of 400 million cubic meters holds four times the capacity of all the dams in Jordan combined.

The preparation for the return to Amman is ridden with anxiety. After ten days of retreat into the mists of time it is difficult to adjust to the trappings of modern life. The wonderfully laid back and relaxed quality of Yemeni life offers an all-too-easy trip into escapism and even though the first signs of Western imperialism are being felt in the major cities, Yemen still remains one of the world's last frontiers.